Wrongfully Detained US Citizens Family Resource Guide

Elizabeth R. Whelan

family member of Paul Whelan,
US citizen held in Russia since 2018

Introduction

Dear friend,

In December of 2018, the Russian security services arrested our brother on false charges. He was imprisoned and held for 18 months, then sentenced to 16 years in a labor camp. As of this writing, he is still in a Russian gulag, a political hostage. If we are fortunate, his freedom is imminent.

Our family has spent those same days and months advocating for his release through the media, on Capitol Hill, at the White House and the State Department. We now have help for my brother at the highest levels, but it has been a confusing and challenging journey. If you are in the same position, you may find our experiences a useful guide for your efforts.

A foreign country has detained your loved one, possibly on false charges. You will need to convince the US government to work for their release. Your best weapon in the fight ahead will be a level head and facts. Be ready for a long haul. The USG is still developing helpful mechanisms to assist a wrongfully detained family member and until stumbling blocks have been worked out, you may face a bumpy road. But if you persevere, good people will come to your aid.

This guide will prepare you for the ordeal of working for your loved one's release. In it, you will find helpful tips, explanations, and options based on my lived experience advocating for our brother. This is not legal advice or a recipe for instant success, however I hope the information in these pages gives you some direction and hope.

Each detainee case is different, but you are not alone. Many American citizens have

been wrongfully detained around the world to extract concessions from the US government. Some are now free; others remain imprisoned. Ultimately, you will need to obtain the help of the USG to achieve your loved one's release. Here are some ways to go about it.

Elizabeth R. Whelan

Paul N. Whelan stands inside a glass and steel-walled prisoner cage at a court hearing in Moscow, Russia, 2019

Photo credit: Sergei Savostyanov/TASS

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Chapter One: Glossary of Useful Terms

Glossary and useful terms

Administration – the officials in the executive branch of government under the President.

Ambassador - the US President's representative to the host country.

AmCit - a shortened form of 'American Citizen'.

Ambassador - the head of an Embassy or diplomatic mission.

Briefing - a meeting or phone call for giving information.

Case - the set of facts or information about your loved one.

Chairman - the person designated to preside over a meeting. In Congress, a committee chairman is also a member of the majority party.

Chief of staff - the senior staff officer of a government office.

Congressional committee - designated members of Congress who work on a specific set of issues.

Congress - the national legislative body of the US government, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Consular Affairs - a bureau of the State Department with approximately 8000 employees, responsible for administering laws, creating regulations and implementing policies relating to

consular services and immigration.

Consulate - a branch of an Embassy in a foreign country.

C-SPAN - (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) a US television nonprofit public service broadcasting many proceedings of the United States federal government.

Desk - a person/group within the State Department responsible for the oversight of relations with a particular foreign country or group of countries.

Detainee - a person held in custody, especially for political reasons.

District - a region of a State defined for political purposes, with an elected Representative to Congress.

Diplomatic mission - a representative office of a national government, such as an Embassy, located in another nation's territory.

DOJ - Department of Justice

Embassy - the headquarters for US Government representatives serving in a foreign country.

HAU - (**Hostage Affairs Unit**) a department within Consular Affairs, working with the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell.

HCFA - (**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**) a standing committee of the US House of Representatives with jurisdiction over bills, programs, and investigations concerning the foreign affairs of the United States.

HRFC - (**Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell**) an interagency group with representatives from across the government, tasked with the recovery of US citizens held as hostages overseas.

Judiciary Committee - a Congressional oversight committee whose roles is to oversee the Department of Justice (DOJ), consider executive and judicial nominations, and review pending legislation.

Letter of engagement - defines the legal relationship between a professional firm and their client.

Mark-up - The process by which congressional committees and subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite proposed legislation.

Member of Congress - a person formally elected to the US national legislative body.

NSA - (**National Security Advisor**) the principal advisor to the President of the United States on

all national security issues.

NSC - (**National Security Council**) the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with senior advisors and cabinet officials.

Off the record – theoretically, this means that the information you share with a reporter cannot be used in any way.

One-sheet - a single-page document that showcases the most important information about your loved one.

On background - theoretically, this means that a reporter can use the information you give them, but cannot name or quote you directly.

Power of Attorney - a legal document giving a person broad or limited legal authority to make decisions about the principal's property, finances, etc.

Privacy Act Waiver - the document used when the State Department obtains permission to release information on behalf of the detained citizen (such as to Congress).

Pro bono - work undertaken without charge.

Ranking member - the most senior member of a congressional or state legislative committee from the minority party.

Readout - an official statement summarizing the points discussed during a meeting or phone call.

Representative - member of Congress elected to a two-year term serving the people of a specific congressional district.

Resolution - a bill which is not a law; they express the views of either the House or Senate.

SCFR - (**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**) a standing committee of the US Senate with jurisdiction over bills, programs, and investigations concerning the foreign affairs of the United States.

SPEHA - (**Special Presidential Envoy on Hostage Affairs**) the person and office leading and coordinating the government's diplomatic engagements on overseas hostage-related matters.

Senator - member of Congress elected to a six-year term serving the people of a specific US state.

Staffers - the employees of a Congressional office, often specializing in specific issues;

monitoring bills and committee meetings in those areas; drafting floor statements for their member of Congress and answering constituent communications.

State Department - the department of the US federal government responsible for the nation's foreign policy and international relations.

Wrongful detention - the arrest and detention of a citizen on false grounds by a foreign nation.

UN Rules on treatment of prisoners - standard minimum rules on prisoner treatment to be upheld by all member countries of the United Nations; known as the Nelson Mandela Rules.

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations - sets out how sovereign states can establish, maintain and terminate diplomatic relations.

Chapter Two: Your immediate goals

Gather Your Forces

The shock is unlike any other; your loved one is in a foreign prison on false charges, and your world falls apart. What should you do first? Who do you call?

By the time you read this, you have probably alerted family members and close friends. If possible, get in touch with the close friends of your loved one. You will need helpers in the weeks to come.

The State Department may already be in touch with you if the country holding your loved one has diplomatic relations with the US. If you have not heard from the State Department or an Embassy, this is where you will start.

The first step is to make sure that the State Department knows that your loved one is in trouble and where they are.

https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/arrest-detention.html

Find the Search box that says 'Learn about your destination' and search for the country in question. This search will take you to a page containing travel alerts and phone numbers for the appropriate State Department Embassy or section.

When you make contact, get the name and phone number of someone with whom you can follow up. I suggest keeping a notebook to record notes about all the calls and meetings you are likely to have in the days and weeks to come.

What facts do you have right now?

No matter how you got the news of your loved one's detention, you will need to separate facts from speculation immediately. (For brevity, I will shorten 'loved one' to LO from now on.)

You may find that there is already media interest in their story. If this is the case, it is possible that the media stories are not accurate and may contain sensational information, especially if they emanate from the country where your LO is being held.

You will need to contact US government officials beyond the State Department and tell them what is happening. It is essential to stick to the facts.

In your notebook, list what you know about the detention so that you can easily refer to facts during a call:

- Purpose of the visit to the foreign country (pleasure or business).
- Their activities on the trip - did you communicate with them during their travels.
- The date and time of the arrest, the charges, the arresting authority, and the location.
- The government officials with whom you have had contact.
- If you have spoken to your loved one, note what they could tell you about the situation.

Also, list essential facts about your loved one:

- Their age
- City and state of residence
- Employer, if known

When talking to officials of either country, media, friends, or family outside of your closest circle, do not engage in speculation. Just stick to what you know to be true.

Don’t give in to the drama

'Don't give in to the drama' was the best advice given to us in the early days of my brother's wrongful detention. At that time, we were overwhelmed and unsure of where to turn. It was difficult to eat or sleep, and we felt guilty about creature comforts like a soft bed and good food when we knew my brother was being kept in isolation and mistreated. It would have been easy to cycle into an unhelpful state of misery and anxiety.

It was important to remember that every moment wasted on drama would be time lost. Instead, we focused on the goal: get my brother home.

We also made a decision that reduced the potential for drama within our family. As we could not communicate with our brother in prison, we would have to manage his affairs and advocate for his release with little or no information to guide us. Rather than having many people giving input, just three of us--my other two siblings and me--would make important decisions by consensus. And our elderly parents would stay informed but not involved in every phone call or meeting, for simplicity's sake.

You may not have other family members available to help, or family relations may not make this feasible. However, it is helpful to have the ear of a couple of sensible people with whom you can discuss options. If family members are not the solution, it is likely that as you begin to make connections, you will find others who can advise you in this manner.

Even if you must start on this journey alone, be open to sharing this burden with others who can work to their strengths as needed to help you advocate for your loved one. It will be easier to rise above any drama if you have trusted companions to work alongside you.

Start counting the days - literally

You probably know exactly how many days your LO has been detained. Start keeping an official count.

Use this information in your emails, phone calls, statements to media, and in the subject line of emails to Congress and the State Department. Never stop reminding people just how long your LO has been wrongfully detained.

When significant milestones come up - 50 days, 100 days, etc., make a point of sending

out a reminder to your contacts.

We also added a counter to our website for Paul, which automatically updates every 24 hours.

Action items - immediate goals

- Get in touch with the State Department if they haven't called you.
- Get names and phone numbers for follow-up calls.
- Reach out to friends and family of your LO.
- Start a notebook where you will record all phone calls and meetings from now on.
- In your notebook, list all the pertinent facts you have about your LO right now.
- Keep track of the number of days your LO has been detained.
- Don't give in to the drama.

Chapter Three: Make a plan

Understanding and choosing roles

Advocating for your loved one is complicated. There are four prominent roles you will be performing as time goes on.

Each of these roles will continue for the duration of your LO's wrongful detention. Whoever agrees to perform each one is taking on a part-time job. Your own life already takes up 24 hours a day. Now you are expected to, at a minimum:

- reach out to many branches of the USG for help
- take care of your LO's personal affairs
- interact with media
- build support and maintain networks of friends and family

All for no pay and with little help. Many family members have found themselves giving up their work or everyday life for months or even years to get their LO back home. But this is not always financially or physically possible.

You are more likely to do a better job for your LO with some assistance. For this reason, you may want to ask trusted family members or friends to fill these roles, at least to get you started.

In my family, we decided that my two siblings and I would form the core team, and each take a role. David became the spokesperson, Andrew managed Paul's personal affairs and coordinated Embassy communications, and I took on the DC advocacy and other outreach. As time went on, we each took on other tasks such as managing a GoFundMe, a FreePaulWhelan website and Facebook page, a Twitter account, and so on.

In the early days and weeks, we communicated by email and phone calls. I had to learn how to conference call, and keeping each other up-to-date was time-consuming. Eventually, David created an online resource area (we use OneNote; you could also use Google docs or any other file sharing method) to have a more efficient way to share the information each of us was accumulating.

Now we primarily use email to keep each other informed of the significant items of importance. Our roles have grown so large and separate that we have to trust that each of us is doing the best we can.

If you do not have anyone who can help right now, consider reaching out to an organization such as Hostage US to see what help they can provide to back you up. You are likely to meet other potential helpers once you start making contacts. (More on Hostage US and other helpful organizations in the Other Resources chapter.)

Who will be spokesperson?

The first role is that of the spokesperson. Typically a spokesperson speaks for the family so that there is a consistent message and to allow other family members to continue with their tasks. The spokesperson can be a family member or a trusted representative.

The best person for this role is a calm person who is comfortable speaking in public and can stay on message. Depending upon the circumstances of your LO's detention, the media can ask uncomfortable questions. (See Media chapter for more on handling these types of inquiries.)

The spokesperson should be available to talk to the media when an event such as a trial or hearing occurs. A flexible schedule or ability to take time from work is a plus.

If you or a family member are not comfortable in this role, there are several options.

The first is to release written statements and take no questions. You can do this via a Facebook page, a website, or in answer to email inquiries.

A second option is to have a family friend or lawyer make these statements.

Our family decided that one brother who had public speaking experience would be the best spokesperson for the job. We had agreed on a public campaign for Paul, and so his twin David would speak for our family for the duration.

Who will manage personal affairs?

The family member or representative who handles your LO's personal affairs will spend a great deal of time sorting out everything from apartment leases, mortgages, and bank accounts, to medical insurance and other debts.

The best person for this on-going role is meticulous, sensible, detail-oriented, and willing to make many phone calls.

The level of involvement in your LO's personal affairs will vary significantly according to the situation. If your LO can communicate with you, you may be able to access accounts, talk to landlords and employers, banks, and credit card companies, to help manage your LO's sudden absence.

In our case, we had no such communication. The bills kept coming in. After six months, we were able to obtain a limited Power of Attorney to deal with some of these matters.

However, several companies, including the IRS, were still a problem. After 22 months, we can finally address the IRS concerns, but two credit cards are still problematic.

It can take months and sometimes years to sort out credit and tax issues if allowed to accumulate. Many detainees come home to these types of challenges and worse. Do the best you can, and let your contacts in the US government know what problems you face regarding your LO's personal affairs. Hostage US may also be able to provide guidance.

Who will interact with the US government?

Another essential role involves advocacy, in other words, interacting with government branches in DC, including Congress and the State Department, to get diplomatic action on your

LO's behalf.

Your goal is to make as many friends as possible in all parts of the government.

It is best if the person in this role (possibly you) is non-partisan. In other words, they must put their politics aside and deal with all manner of individuals and positions. Advocating for your LO will mean being bi-partisan and bringing folks from both parties together to help a US citizen in trouble.

This advocate will need to spend a lot of time making contacts and possibly traveling to DC. Over time, you can maintain connections by phone, email, or video calls.

This role is time-consuming and requires energy and passion.

Who will reach out to other organizations?

Another role involves reaching out to organizations for support, fundraising, letter-writing, etc. Depending on your situation, this outreach could be to a church or religious group, a club or hostage advocacy organization, or NGO's (non-government organizations) that have a role in supporting families and helping the USG's efforts.

I have included a list of some of these organizations in the Other Resources chapter. It is worth calling each to get your LO's case on their radar, even if they cannot assist at this time.

Friends and family are likely to contact you with offers to help in some manner, and it can be daunting to know what to ask them to do. Useful early tasks for them to undertake include:

- Writing letters in support of your LO to members of Congress
- Raising funds through a GoFundMe or similar campaign
- Writing letters to your LO, if that is possible

It can be valuable to remember that managing the people who want to help also takes time, but this network will support you and your LO through this ordeal and after they return.

After the initial contacts are made, you can take over the continuing communication if that works best for your situation.

Action items - make a plan

- Decide who will be part of your on-going team to advocate for your LO.
- Who will be a spokesperson for your LO and your advocacy efforts.
- Who will manage your LO's personal affairs, to the extent this is possible.
- Who will interact with the US government and advocate directly for your LO.
- Who will reach out to other organizations and NGO's and ask for help.
- Who can help organize fund-raising and letterwriting campaigns.

Do the best you can and act in good faith. You will likely have time to make changes as you go along. For the moment, figure out how you would like to address these critical roles with the resources you have on hand and let's move on to Next Steps.

Chapter Four: Next Steps

What to do next

The next steps will involve a lot of decision-making and phone calls. If you can't discuss these steps with your LO (and that is most often the case), do your best and get the ball rolling.

If possible, divide up these tasks with family and report back via email to the group.

The notebook comes in very handy at this point. It may take several days to find the information you need for each step. For example, in our case, not only could we not talk to our brother, we were concerned that the security services would take advantage of access to his social media, bank accounts, and credit cards. But we didn't know what those accounts were or how to access them. We plunged in and did the best we could.

For us, it became immediately apparent that our initial efforts were a stop-gap measure. Without the ability to talk to our LO, we did what we could, hoping that it might be possible to communicate with him in the future on these items.

Bank accounts and credit cards

An essential next step is to secure bank accounts and credit cards.

Even though you may not have access to the credit card or bank information, you can

call the four major credit cards (Discover, AMEX, Visa, and Mastercard), ask them to look up your LO's account, and advise them of the situation. They are unlikely to share any other information with you or even acknowledge an account. Do what you can.

Ask to speak to a manager or supervisor if needed. Your initial goal is to have a note attached to the account recording the contact and the info-sharing. Your LO may have recourse later to have charges, penalties, and interest removed after they return; for the moment, your goal is to alert the companies to your LO's detention to protect against fraud.

If you are aware of banks or credit unions your LO uses, you can talk to the bank manager about the situation. Ask them to monitor the account activity.

For each of these calls, note the date, phone number, contact person, and conversation(s) in your notebook.

Employer

If your LO is employed, you will want to contact their employer to let them know what is happening.

Keep a record of phone numbers, who you spoke with, and your conversation(s).

If they work for a larger company, you may want to inquire if your LO has medical insurance or any other benefits that might help. The HR person may not share this information with you but at least they will have been alerted.

Ask for support with advocacy if the company might have useful contacts.

Some employers will go all out to help their employees get home through advocacy and influence, advertising, and general support.

In our case, Paul's employer -- a billion-dollar global corporation -- was helpful for a couple of weeks but eventually terminated his employment despite it being evident that the FSB had arrested him on false charges. It seemed his employer was afraid to have their name in print associated with Paul's case. It was infuriating to have so little help from a corporation that could have easily afforded to come to Paul's aid.

Other corporations will want to distance themselves from any association that might be 'bad for the brand.'

Some businesses may be too small to be helpful or unsure of what to do apart from giving you words of comfort. They may be concerned that the charges against your LO are accurate.

If your LO is self-employed, you may need to contact clients whose projects are in process.

Take whatever help you can get, do your best to explain the situation as you know it, and then move on.

Protect your loved one's accounts, social media

The next challenge is to find and protect any social media or email accounts, which might become compromised by whoever is holding your LO.

You may want to comment on your LO's timeline on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to let friends of your LO know what is going on.

And you may find that it is not possible to gain access in any useful way to the social media accounts, so depending on your situation, it might be helpful if someone can monitor the accounts for unauthorized activity.

We started with social media. The Russian security services (FSB) had already been poking around in Paul's Facebook account. We were concerned that the FSB would tamper with his social media to plant false evidence. We did not have any account access information, so we took screenshots of his social media timeline as a record.

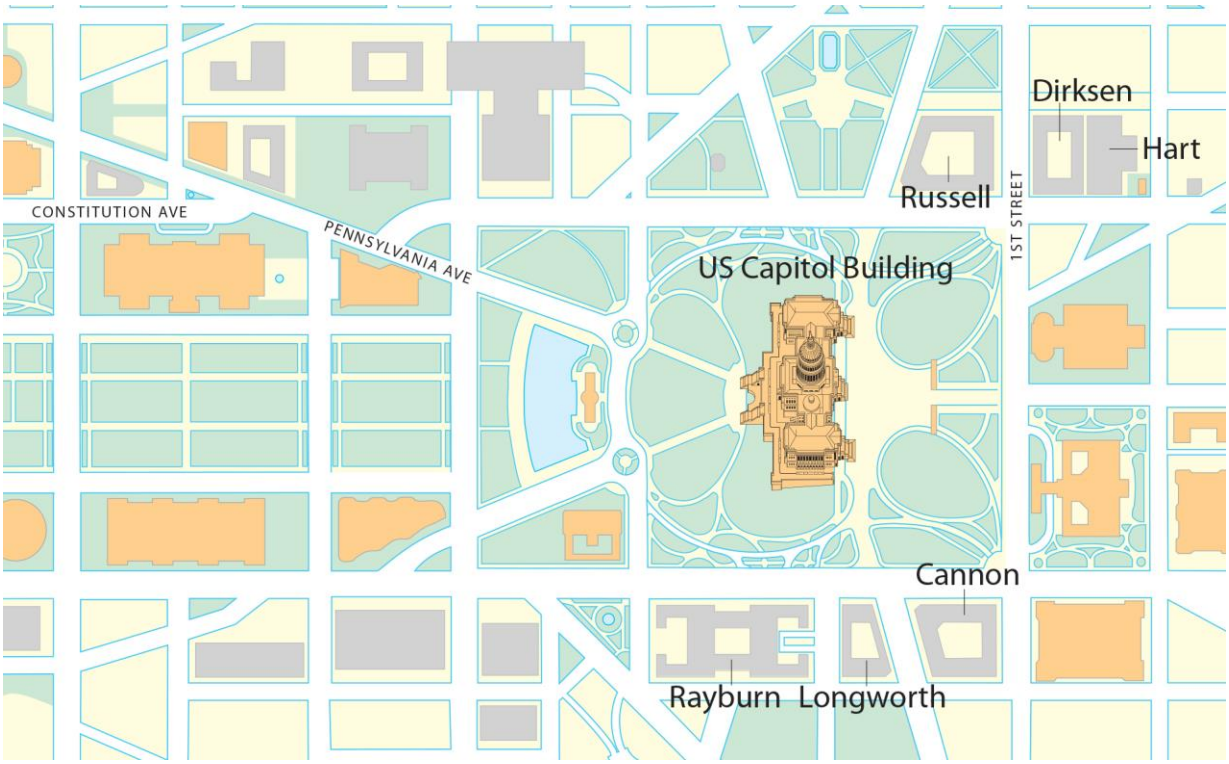
Eventually, we communicated with Paul about password information and could monitor his email account as well.

Capitol Hill - an introduction

In Washington, DC, there is a physical hill called Capitol Hill. At the top of it sits the United States Capitol or the Capitol Building where the lawmakers of the country -- the Senators and Representatives -- meet.

On each side of the Hill are large buildings of offices that house the Senators and Representatives. The three Senate buildings are on the north side of the Hill and are called Russell,

Dirksen, and Hart. The House offices are on the Hill's south side and are called Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn.



As citizens, we tend to think of 'Congress' and 'Capitol Hill' and 'DC' as these monolithic entities that are interconnected. However, Congressional offices are very silo-ed, meaning that they have little interaction or ways to share info. They focus on serving their constituents (the people in their state), which keeps them so busy that it can take great effort to build support for an issue between members of Congress.

Any Senator or Representative should be able to get behind supporting a US citizen in trouble in a hostile foreign country. You will find that many people are willing to listen to your concerns.

But it takes a long time to build that willingness into a coalition that will take action. You, the family member, have little choice but to visit or communicate with each office individually, to tell your story over and over, and work your way from one office to the next gathering support for your LO. With 100 Senatorial offices, and 435 House offices, this is an

overwhelming task, and there is no person, task force, or caucus to help you get this done.

In the next chapter, we will explore how to target the right people for your situation, but first, here's a look at how Congressional offices work and with whom you are most likely to interact.

Your members of Congress

You may never have had the need to contact a member of Congress before. However, there are 535 of them in total, and they are there to work for you, the constituent.

Each state has 2 Senators (100 total). The 50 states divide the 435 Representatives in proportion to each state's total population, with one per district. Senators are the Senate's legislative or law-making body, and Representatives are the House's legislative body. They are all members of Congress. (For brevity, I will use the abbreviation MoC from now on.)

We tend to think of them as only passing laws and budgets, but they also solve problems for their states' and districts' constituents. When you need help, their job is to be there for you.

You can engage the Congressmen/women where your LO lives, in your State and district, and in states and districts where other family members live. The more, the better.

There are several websites that you can use to look up who the current members of Congress are, and their phone information. (See Other Resources chapter.) Once you identify Congress members, you will want to call their DC (Capitol Hill) office and not their local home-state office.

Here are the first calls to make:

- The Representative of your district
- The Representative of your LO's district, if different
- The Representatives of any of your family members, if different
- Your 2 Senators
- Your LO's 2 Senators, if different
- The Senators of any of your family members, if different

When you make the calls, you will talk to a staffer who will take your message.

You will want to prepare your message in advance. Here is an example:

My name is ---------- and I am calling with an urgent matter. My (LO) is being detained by ---------- in ---------- and the charges against him are false. We could use some advice. I would be happy to talk to Congressman ---------- or your foreign policy staff person and explain the circumstances in more detail.

If you talk to a Congressional office from any state but your own, explain if you have a connection to that state. It's not necessary but it helps.

You will likely be able to arrange a phone meeting with someone on the staff of the Congressional office. Start anywhere, with anyone who will talk to you.

If your contact with the Congressional office needs to get more information from the State Department but isn't sure who to call, you can direct them to call the:

- House Liaison office at 202-226-4642

  or

- Senate Liaison Office (202) 228-1602/1603

See the Getting Started with Outreach chapter for information on conducting the meeting and expanding your outreach beyond these contacts.

Congressional staffers

Congressional staffers are the hardest-working people on Capitol Hill. Your job is to meet as many as you can and maintain contact with them throughout your ordeal.

Staffers are not interns, as many outside of DC might think. Interns can be part of the MoC's staff; however, the word 'staffer' refers to the many sharp, experienced, and skilled individuals who keep the MoC looking smart and informed.

Many staffers are young and energetic, with degrees in political science, public policy, law, and communications. Working on the Hill is often a stepping stone to more permanent positions elsewhere. Older staffers have built robust networks and have usually served with

several MoCs over time.

As wonderful as it is to meet a Representative or Senator in person, they are not likely to be available every time you get in touch with the office. And to be honest, the staffers often have a better sense of how to get things done. They know many of the other staffers that work along similar lines throughout the Hill and can connect you directly to other helpful people. Here are some of the types of staffers you will encounter:

Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff

Works directly with the member of Congress and is in charge of the staff. A CoS is the MoC's right-hand person and is highly experienced and extremely busy. As such, they may not meet with you but can connect you with other helpful staffers who can listen to your situation, and then brief the CoS and the MoC.

Legislative Aide or Assistant or Correspondent

This job title refers to the many Congressional staffers who handle everything from constituent concerns to research and support for the MoC's committee work. They keep the information flowing. Depending on the committees on which the MoC serves, the Legislative Aide may have expertise in a specific area. Often you will start by info-sharing with someone at the legislative level, who will then connect you with the foreign policy staff.

Military Legislative Assistant or Aide

A Military Legislative Assistant can be useful if your LO has current or prior military experience. Often they work for MoCs on armed services and intelligence committees and deal with veterans affairs and the like. They may have a foreign policy or national security background and a security clearance.

Foreign Policy Advisor

A foreign policy advisor is an excellent staff person with whom to work. They are up to date on foreign affairs and are often connected with the House or Senate foreign relations

committees. They are the most likely to understand the challenges your LO is facing overseas.

In each case, the staffer's job is to get the latest information from you and then share that information internally. For this reason, the info-sharing you do with any staffer keeps the MoC informed and concerned about your LO.

We have found that although it is beneficial to speak directly to members of Congress when possible, it is also advantageous to talk to sympathetic staff members, who are often the ones with the most detailed knowledge on various topics.

How to address a member of Congress or staffer

Meeting MoCs can be intimidating. So much depends on their support and you may be concerned about making a mistake. Do not worry. MoCs understand that this may be very new for you. Do your best.

Member of Congress (MoC):

If you meet a MoC, you can safely address them as 'Congressman' or 'Congresswoman.' An example would be," Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about ------, Congressman." This phrasing works for Senators or Representatives.

However, for Senators, it is also proper to call them Senator. An example would be, "Senator Peters, how good of you to take the time to see me today! I want to give you the latest information about ------."

When you are writing to a MoC, you can use their title ('Dear Senator Peters', or 'Dear Representative Smith'). If you are writing to their staffer, you can refer to the MoC by their title or by using Congressman(woman) in the email or letter body. For example:

Dear Joan,

Thank you for meeting with us to talk about ------'s wrongful detention in ---------. And please extend my thanks to Senator Peters for taking the time to discuss the challenges we are

facing. We appreciate the Congressman's support.

Sincerely,

Evan

Some female MoC's like to be called Congresswoman, and others prefer not to make the gender distinction and are okay with Congressman. No one will be offended whichever you use, so don't stress over this, but if you are curious which the MoC prefers, check out their website. Whichever term they use on the site will be their preferred form of address.

Staffer:

Most staffers go by their first name. To avoid confusion, many staffers will add their MoC's name in brackets after their own so that you know for whom they work. An example is Jordan Wells (Peters).

Pro tip: the email format for the House and Senate are relatively consistent. If you know a name but not an email, the structure is usually:

sarah.smith@mail.house.gov for the staff of Representatives

Or

sarah_smith@cardin.senate.gov for the staff of Senators

The latter example would be for a staffer working for Senator Cardin. Representatives' staffers are not identified by their Congressman, but Senators' staffers are.

If you get a bounce, try capitalizing the first letters of the name.

The State Department

By now, you have probably been in touch with the State Department in some manner.

An essential section of Consular Affairs is American Citizens Services. In general, Consular Services (CA) manages an enormous flow of information to do with US citizens overseas, from adoption tracking to visas to helping citizens in trouble. Many Embassies contain

an American Citizen Services department. If the US does not have diplomatic relations or an Embassy in the country where your LO is detained, ACS can connect families with other helpful State Dept staff.

The State Department's role is one of diplomacy and support for American citizens. It is also huge, as it needs to manage relations with most of the world's 195 nations. There are numerous sub-sections of State, and some of these deal with particular countries with whom the US has diplomatic relations. These subsections are called Desks.

For example, as Russia has imprisoned Paul, we have met with people who work on the Russia Desk. The Desk has expertise in the country or area; their history, politics, and language.

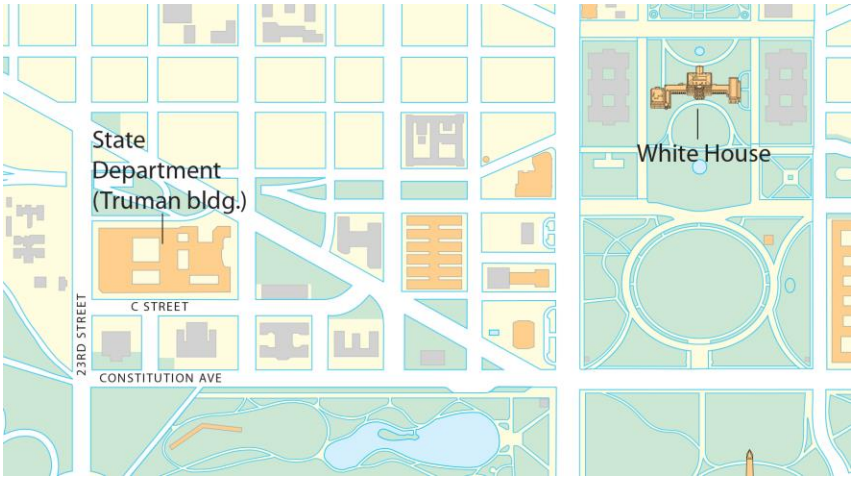
As you make contacts in the State Department, make sure you talk to people in Consular Affairs, American Citizen Services, and the Desk of the applicable region.

There are a lot of wrongful detentions around the world for the State Department to track. Keeping in regular contact with these folks will result in a strong network within the department and help keep your LO top-of-mind.

Visiting the State Department

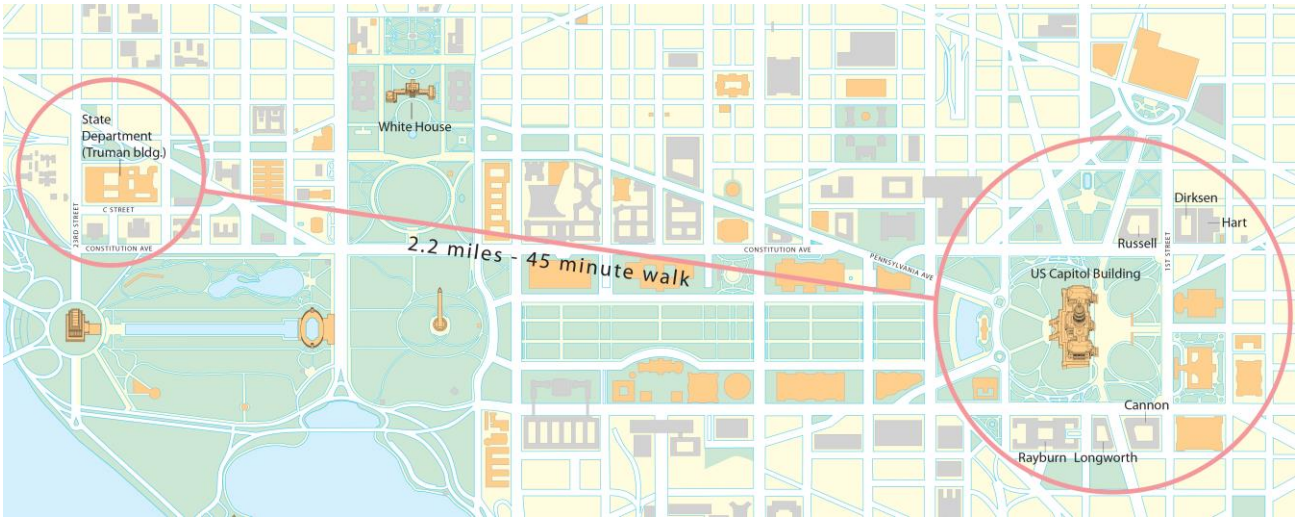
The main State Department building in DC is the Harry S. Truman building at 2201 C. Street NW, about 2.2 miles from Capitol Hill.

There is a complicated check-in procedure at State involving a security checkpoint and, as of my last visit, a waiting area where your contact is alerted of your arrival. You then wait for an escort from your contact's office, who takes you to another desk where you are given a badge, so remember to bring your ID. This person will also escort you to your meeting.



I highly recommend scheduling a half day for your State Department meeting(s) because of this

complexity. Unexpected delays can happen if a large delegation arrives at the same time you do. I arrive three-quarters of an hour before my meeting and bring a good book.



If you take a taxi, the traffic can be quite heavy in this area despite the short distance, so allow a lot of extra time if you are going from meetings on Capitol Hill to the State Department, or vice versa.

Some Consular Affairs offices are in separate buildings around DC, so do be sure that you confirm where your meeting is. Only the Truman building has the long security wait; at the other buildings, you will still go through security and get a badge, but they won't be as busy at the entrance.

How to address a State Department official

To address an Ambassador, you are always safe to address them in person or in writing as 'Ambassador Sullivan.'

For the Secretary of State there are more options. In writing, Secretary of State refers to their complete title, such as 'Secretary of State Blinken,' and in person, you will greet them as 'Mr. Secretary' or 'Mrs. Secretary." An example would be, "Mr. Secretary, I can't thank you enough for meeting with us today."

For all other officials (Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, etc.), use their

complete title in the salutation when writing:

Dear Assistant Secretary Pierce,

And then if you are referring to another official, you can write out their title as well, or abbreviate, as in:

It was kind of you and DAS Scott to meet with me yesterday.

Their titles are also used for clarification when you are talking about one person to another. For example, "I met with Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott yesterday at the State Department."

However, when you meet them in person, it is acceptable to address them as Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr., etc., based on what you know of them.

Likewise, you are always safe to use a simple, polite form of address such as Mr./Ms., whenever you interact with anyone in the State Department. You may end up on a first-name basis, but in the land of diplomacy, it's nice to start with some formalities.

Privacy Act Waiver

One of the first hurdles you must surmount in your work with the State Department is obtaining a Privacy Act Waiver for information surrounding your LO. The Privacy Act of 1974, as it implies, means that the State Department keeps any interaction with and information about your LO private and confidential.

That's great, except that you are likely to want the State Department to share what they know with Congress. At the very least, you need State to verify to MoCs and staffers that what you are telling them is correct.

A Privacy Act Waiver, the document that gives State the okay to share information on a limited basis, needs to be signed by the detainee, your LO. As you can imagine, this leads to huge problems if consular access (visits by the Embassy) are denied, or as in our case, if the prison refuses to let your LO sign the document.

In such cases, the State Department will do all they can to carefully convey information

in such a way as not to violate the Privacy Act on your LO's behalf while still sharing necessary facts with appropriate officials.

See Other Resources section at the end of this guide for information about how American Citizen Services works regarding the Privacy Act. It's long but worth a read and includes great examples of how much information can be released by ACS, under what circumstances, and how they respond to different types of queries.

We also found that *not* having a PAW is a valuable advocacy tool. Refusing to allow your LO to sign this waiver is a violation of rights about which both State and Congress comfortable speaking out, and will give your advocacy a stepping stone.

I mention this because when you are having trouble getting something simple done for your LO, it creates an opening for you to make a fuss to the media or other officials.

If the problem is at the US end, it can help you get others to apply pressure to resolve the issue.

Suppose the problem is at the foreign country end (and particularly if violations accumulate). In that case, you will find it easier to argue that your LO is wrongfully detained based on these human rights violations, even if a trial over the 'charges' has not yet taken place.

Personal affairs and Power of Attorney

If you are trying to manage your LO's personal affairs, complications abound. Navigating someone else's matters can be a minefield and extremely stressful. Problems include not having passwords to access accounts, not being able to talk to customer service representatives without necessary data, being unable to resolve issues to do with bills, leases, taxes, etc.

People at the other end of the phone line or email are often sympathetic, but their policies don't include a process for dealing with your situation.

These issues pile up if you can't communicate with your LO. Depending on the challenges you face, you may need a Power of Attorney (POA). A POA allows you (or another representative) to act for your LO during their detention.

As in the Privacy Act Waiver, even a limited Power of Attorney (for example, one that

covers only financial issues and ends with your LO's release) needs to be signed by your LO and witnessed.

In our case, it took ten months and an Ambassador's visit to the prison to get a Power of Attorney for Paul. It has taken another year to unwind the problems accumulated in those first months, and we still have not finished.

You may have already found that the hurdles to managing your LO's personal affairs are proving impossible. And even if you have the assistance of an attorney, corporations and landlords do not respond well to attempts to have their income stream put on hold.

One option is to ask for a letter from the State Department stating your LO's situation. At the outset of their detention, the State Dept is unlikely to declare your LO 'wrongfully detained,' and so a letter will be of limited use. However, any letter at all on official letterhead will be a step in the right direction.

(More information on the 'wrongful detention' classification can be found in Chapter Six: How government works regarding wrongful detentions.)

And I would strongly suggest that you get in touch with Hostage US and see if they have anyone in their network who can help you manage some of the problems.

Most of all, know that this is one aspect where families have faced enormous challenges. Detainees often come home to ruined credit, penalties/interest owed on back taxes, depleted resources, and difficulty getting back on their feet.

Do what you can to mitigate this outcome, and do not be afraid to ask everyone from your MoC to the State Department to Hostage US and others for help. Even if they cannot resolve some issues, they must understand the additional burdens you and your LO are carrying. It will be understandable if you can't solve all the problems that arise during your LO's wrongful detention.

Do your best, make decisions in good faith, and concentrate your energies on getting your LO back home.

Legal Assistance and Washington insiders

A valuable asset to your advocacy is help from a Washington, DC, insider. Finding a

suitable person and vetting them is an important step.

As we did, you may find that people who have left the government want to help you. Depending on how long ago they worked in DC, they may or may not be useful to your cause. The halls of power are more like revolving doors. Changes in administration, changes in leadership at any level, and general career movement mean that contacts are continually moving in and out.

The person or people you are looking for will have current or very recent ties to the government in useful ways (with Congress, the State Department, or the National Security Council, for example). They may have an understanding of foreign policy/detainee/hostage issues. They don't need to meet all of those criteria; what you need is their help to make contacts of your own. If they still have government connections and a decent understanding of where to insert you, they can help.

These helpers could be lawyers, lobbyists, or PR (public relations) experts. Lobbyists and PR people spend a good deal of time mingling with the movers and shakers in DC. Lawyers might have connections on Capitol Hill or within the current administration (political appointees and elected officials).

You are looking for someone well-placed who is also willing to work pro bono (for free) to help you get your LO released and back to the US.

Google has made life easier in that regard. Many DC law firms say that pro bono work is a component of their practice on their websites. If you can find a lawyer, lobbyist, or PR person who has experience working with hostage or foreign affairs issues, for example, they are a good starting point. Even if they can't take on your case themselves, they may be able to point you to someone who can.

In our case, a lawyer approached us. He could tell we needed guidance and generously committed to helping us make connections and advocate for Paul. Almost two years later, he is still working with us. Although we did ask him for legal help at times, he was invaluable in explaining how the government worked, who to target in our advocacy, helped us make connections, and advised on what to say or ask when we did get meetings. Our work with him was quite intensive for the first year of Paul's detention. At this point, we now know enough to

proceed mostly on our own, but he is still available for questions and input.

Over the months, and through our lawyer, we also made the acquaintance of both a PR person and a lobbyist, who provided more contacts and did some back-channel work to help us out. All of these people did so voluntarily.

From the lawyer, we obtained a 'letter of engagement.' This letter spelled out what work he intended to do on our behalf, when the engagement would end, the pro bono nature of the work, and that either party could exit the agreement at any time.

Our other helpers had less formal arrangements with us, but our lawyer confirmed the pro bono nature of their assistance. Their know-how has been invaluable, as has been their access to people we could never hope to meet otherwise.

It's worth your time to start building a DC team. However, you may also find yourself being approached by lawyers and others out of the blue and not know how to establish whether they are trustworthy or the right people for the job. It is unfortunate, but some people want to ride on the coattails of another's ill-fortune for their own gain.

Hostage US can help you vet anyone about whom you may have reservations. They may also be able to connect you with pro bono assistance if you need some help. Likewise, the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (see Other Resources for more info on the JWFLF) has excellent connections in DC and is a fantastic advocacy group with whom to connect.

You cannot become a DC insider in a week or two, but you can quickly get up to speed with some helpers. Use Google, Hostage US, and the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation to point you in the right direction. Don't be shy about making calls -- people will want to help your LO get home.

Should you travel overseas?

You may be wondering if you should travel to the country where your LO is detained.

Only you can make this decision. Each case is different. You will need to balance factors such as your resources, the personal risk to you if you make the journey, how much help you will be at their end, and how you will also get help from the USG while you are in the foreign country.

You will also want to think through your goals of traveling overseas and what you think such a trip could accomplish. Consider what the best-case scenario and the worst-case scenario of making the trip might be to help weigh your options.

There is no perfect solution. In our case, our LO warned us against traveling to Russia. We turned our attention to advocating and supporting Paul from afar.

Other families may want to be closer to their LO, to help fight in court, to offer comfort and support in person during this scary time. Only you and your family can decide whether the circumstances in your case warrant you traveling to visit, or to stay, in proximity to your LO.

If you decide to travel to your LO's location, check with the State Department first. You will want to know about travel advisories, special visas, and any protection you might need while in-country.

Should you pay for a lawyer overseas?

If your LO has been charged with a crime and needs to appear in court, you may wish to hire a lawyer to represent them. However, there are some factors to consider. Whether or not to hire a lawyer is a call that only you, your advisers, and your LO can make.

Wrongful detention can be a means by which the foreign country seeks to extract concessions from the US. In these cases, the trial will conclude with conviction and sentencing no matter how good a lawyer is working the defense. Without the defendant locked up, the foreign country will not get what they want from the US.

Determine how much a lawyer will cost and what they are promising for the money. If the State Department has an Embassy in this country, they can provide a local lawyers list.

The State Department has not vetted these lawyers. You will need to check them out yourself by reviewing their credentials online or by email or phone. Be prepared for a language barrier; not everyone will speak English. By using email, you will be able to translate emails using Google Translate or similar apps.

Many lawyers believe Americans have deep pockets and charge exorbitant sums with little to show for it. An international firm may be reputable but also expensive.

You need information about that country's legal and justice system. Ask the State

Department for information about how similar trials have concluded, and use that data to help in your own decision.

Paul was unable to select his lawyer. The Russian Federation assigned him a lawyer who was in cahoots with the security services. The courts rejected an attempt on our part to substitute this man with a better lawyer.

On top of that, the new lawyer wanted $150,000 up-front to defend Paul. On learning this, the appointed lawyer also tried to shake us down for the same amount. We explained that we didn't have those types of resources, which was right, but we also wanted to forestall further extortion attempts. (Eventually, the same appointed lawyer told the press he was working 'pro bono'!)

After the trial, Paul was convicted and sentenced, as we knew he would be. The charges against him were 'espionage,' and there was no way Russia would give up the chance to create a feeling of value around their captive or walk away from a potential trade piece.

The State Department, Hostage US, and the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (JWFLF) have all seen similar scenarios play out and can provide you with information, if not advice. Former detainees' families may be willing to talk to you about how they made their own decisions. Connect to them via the aforementioned NGO's.

What is this going to cost?

Not including the costs of legal representation overseas, or your travel overseas, the following are the other types of expenses to consider. Most families end up spending all they can manage on advocacy, with decisions made according to budgets. Travel to Washington, DC, accounts for a lot of that spending.

Don't feel bad if you can't go to DC or if your budget limits your options in other ways. America is a large country, and not everyone lives in proximity to Washington or a travel hub of any sort. Your own family life, children, job, etc., may ultimately prevent you from making this sort of journey. Thankfully phone calls, email, and video conferencing can substitute for many in-person visits.

If you do decide to travel to DC, here are some costs to consider:

- Travel to and from home to the closest airport or train station.
- Round trip ticket to DC.
- If driving, cost of rental car, gas, wear and tear on your vehicle.
- If driving, parking lot charges in DC.
- Taxis, Ubers, Metro subway tickets for getting around town.
- Accommodation in DC for 3 or 4 nights (a suggested length of stay).
- Food and drink in transit, and for the days in DC.
- Clothing, including suits, dresses, skirts, pants, shoes or boots, coats, etc., according to your current wardrobe, the weather in DC (which might be hotter or colder than where you live) and what you feel is appropriate for meetings.

Other costs to consider include:

- Lost wages while you are in DC.
- Lost wages while you do the follow-up from a trip to DC.
- Childcare or eldercare while you are traveling.
- Translation costs for documents in foreign languages.
- Any other unforeseen costs that come up during a detention.
- Purchasing and shipping needed items to your LO in the foreign country.
- Long-distance international phone calls or phone cards to communicate with your LO

And for the duration of your LO's wrongful detention, there is the ever-present cost of the lost wages while you continue to advocate for their release. Most families say that for at least one family member, advocacy is the equivalent of a full-time job. If you cannot afford to give up your current work, you can plan on working as if you have two jobs until your LO is released.

It is challenging to convey to those in the USG just how much stress this puts on a family. There is constant worry, anxiety, and guilt over the LO's situation. There is intense pressure on the family to be in DC and to advocate full-time, to show your commitment to your LO's return. As more than one member of Congress and State Department official has said to

me, "If you don't care, who will?"

However, the people you will be dealing with in DC are getting a salary for their work, and you are not. When you get the runaround, are refused help or stonewalled, or can't get the support your LO needs while your resources are dwindling, the anxiety can become overwhelming and draining.

Managing this stress, taking care of all your other commitments and responsibilities, and keeping up the energy for advocacy for weeks and months on end, will need a ton of willpower and focus.

However, no magic amount of spending will get your LO released. Do your best within the means you have, be as thrifty as possible, and try to build that DC network through pro bono helpers so that you can make the contacts you need as quickly as possible.

Reach out to Hostage US and anyone else you can when the stress gets to be too much. Others have walked this path before and will be there with a sympathetic and listening ear.

(Note: Hostage US can often help cover costs such as flights to travel to DC to meet with government officials. Do check with them to see what help they might be able to give you.)

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In our case, I took the DC aspect of advocacy because I work for myself and could be flexible. The advocacy decimated my savings. However, I traveled almost monthly to DC due to my proximity to a train station. Travel by air was not feasible from my location. Each month I took a car to a ferry, then another ferry, then a 2-hour bus ride to the station, then an 8-hour train ride to DC, and repeated this sequence on the way home.

I often stayed in youth hostels, as I could make more trips by being thrifty. I took overnight trains to save a couple of nights' accommodation. Friends of family members let me stay with them repeatedly, as did other kind souls I met over time. Still, the costs add up. At the time of this writing, coronavirus has put a stop to in-person visits for now. Zoom calls with staffers are taking their place and may continue.

Action items - next steps

- Secure bank accounts and credit cards. Note the names, phone numbers, date, and conversation for each call you make concerning your LO's personal affairs.
- Alert your LO's employer. If your LO is self-employed, you may need to contact currrent clients.
- Post to your LO's social media accounts to update friends.
- If you are concerned about social media account security, contact the platforms for help.
- If you cannot access social media to secure the accounts, take screen shots of timelines in order to identify future tampering.
- Review how to address a member of Congress (MoC) in person or in writing.
- Call every member of Congress (Senator and Representative) you can, starting with your and your LO's home state.
- Ask for phone calls or meetings with members of Congress or their staff.
- Review how to address State Department officials in person or in writing.
- Make contacts in the State Department in Consular Affairs, American Citizen Services, and the Desk of the country holding your LO.
- If your LO has been able to sign a Privacy Act waiver, information about their detention can be shared with Congress. If not, ask your contacts at the State Department how to handle this situation.
- If you cannot communicate effectively with your LO, check with your lawyer, your MoC and State Department contacts, and Hostage US for ideas to manage your LO's affairs.

- Ask for the services of a lawyer willing to work pro bono.
- Consider the pros and cons of traveling to your LO.
- Consider the pros and cons of hiring a lawyer for your LO.
- Consider the expenses that may be incurred over the weeks and months as you advocate for your LO and support them in detention.

Chapter Five: Getting Started with outreach

Release regular updates

No matter what other outreach methods you add, you can take the most crucial step by keeping track of your contacts and updating them regularly. This one act of keeping everyone apprised will save you time and keep your LO top of mind.

The best way to send out these updates is via email. Collect the email address, name, and phone number of everyone with whom you talk. Ask them if you can keep them updated over time. Most people will say yes, or occasionally suggest that you update a different person in that office.

Keep this information together -- whether on a spreadsheet, a Word document, handwritten in a notebook -- in such a way that when you are ready to send out your first update, you can include every one of your contacts you have made to date.

Our brother David did a more sophisticated version of this to keep in touch with media contacts by having a way for them to sign up as if for a newsletter.

I keep it simple. I have everyone on an Excel spreadsheet. I send out an email to myself and BCC everyone I want to include in the update. That way I am not sharing everyone's email address with the extended group, but all the people I BCC will get the information. (If you are

not sure how to do this, test it out on friends first!)

Over time, I created contact groups so that all the Congressional staffers are in one group, all the State contacts in another, DC helpers in another, etc. However, I usually send the same update to all.

Here's how our family goes about sending out updates:

- David creates a statement for the media, mentioning pertinent stories in the US and foreign news, any Embassy or other updates we have received, etc. He sends these statements out every two weeks unless some significant events occur (hearings, trial, emergency surgery, etc.)

- I then take the same statement and send it out to all the contacts I have made to date in DC and elsewhere. Depending on the statement contents, I might add or modify information tailoring it to the DC audience.

- I then send David's statement to the GoFundMe donors as an update and post the same information to the @freepaulwhelan Facebook page.

- Lastly, I add the statement to a growing list of updates on www.freepaulwhelan.com.

All this activity takes time. It helps to have a process you follow every time. If you start as soon as you can, even if you only have a few people to update, you will create a historical record of your LO's detention and your advocacy as you go. The list of updates will be a useful aid if your situation extends itself into months and years, as ours has.

Website and Facebook page

If you are public about your LO's detention, building a simple website and a Facebook page are useful tasks to slot in when you can.

Social media has limited use in swaying public opinion or getting support from the USG.

Where it shines is in its ability to keep friends and family updated. If you find yourself telling people the same thing over and over (an exhausting task), that's a sign that a Facebook page or website is needed.

If you aren't tech-savvy, ask a friend or relative to set this up. Make it simple and cheap. Just get it started. You can always add more photos and info later.

Update the website every couple of weeks (by using the statements, if possible). Put this on your calendar. If a media or government person needs to get up-to-date quickly, you can point them in the direction of your website.

Update the Facebook page whenever you want -- weekly if you can, to keep everyone in the loop. But even if your style of writing Facebook posts is personal, stick to the facts. Journalists may read and quote from your page. Likewise, the hostile foreign country that has your LO can also see the page! So be cautious about what you post.

We have found that a fact-filled website (www.freepaulwhelan.com) with frequent updates, and a more newsy Facebook page (@freepaulwhelan), worked best for us.

We did add a Twitter account @freepaulwhelan to amplify any tweets from officials and give us another way to interact and get the attention of media and commentators. We follow reporters who follow us back once they realize we may be a source of news.

On Twitter, our brother David has been remarkably restrained. He has a large following on a work-related account and has to keep a balance. I have more freedom to speak out, which has made me feel better but hasn't changed the outcome. I managed to get into a heated exchange with a Russian spokesperson and have had my tweets quoted in the news. So once again, you may wish to take a more cautious approach.

Do not feel pressured to use Twitter for advocacy. You can always add Twitter in later if you feel so inclined.

GoFundMe

For us, a GoFundMe campaign was a necessity. Russian prisons provide little food and supplies and rely on families to deliver fresh food, clothing, and such (including toilet paper!) We were fortunate that the good souls at the US Embassy in Moscow could provide these items

in our stead. However, we still needed to come up with the finances.

We created a GoFundMe account specifically to support Paul in prison, help with his legal bills, and get him back to the US.

It was a priority to reassure donors that the campaign was legitimate with responsible handling of funds. Thanks to our brother Andrew's research, we decided to take a 'clean hands' approach with only one person managing the money. Andrew set up a trust account at a local bank that links to the GoFundMe campaign.

Having a trust account means setting up a legal trust through a lawyer, yet another expense. But in the long run, it means we can reassure donors that the campaign is managed correctly, and Andrew is solely responsible for moving the funds to the Embassy account, etc.

A GoFundMe campaign can be another way to put information about your LO out on the internet. We repeated much of the profile information from the website and send out regular updates to the donors. It isn't a large source of funds, but it has made a difference and allowed friends and family to contribute in a meaningful way in the face of this extraordinary challenge.

A one-sheet

As you are probably starting to notice when reading this guide, your most significant task in advocating for your LO is info-sharing. Information is your friend. It is the currency you will use to get access to the meetings you want to have.

The US government is complex, and there is no 'hive-mind' whereby everyone who works in DC is up on everything going on everywhere. I was surprised to find out how much information MoCs and staffers get from the news media without verifying details in any way, a massive problem if the media has latched on to an unhelpful or sensational story angle concerning your LO. You will find yourself refuting the story for weeks and months to come.

Your best option is to stick to the facts and anticipate questions that people might have concerning your LO.

Suppose the country in which your LO is being held has a US Embassy. In that case, you should be able to arrange for regular updates as to your LO's health and wellbeing and share this information with MoCs or State Dept officials who might not have had a chance to be

briefed on the specifics.

When you ask for meetings (either the first contact with an office or as a follow-up), let them know you want to share the latest information you have. Knowledge is a currency you can use; it is also currency a staffer or MoC can use. Your info-sharing saves them research time and keeps them looking sharp and at the front of the pack.

And when you visit a new contact, take along a one-sheet that will serve as a summary of your LO's situation. A one-sheet is precisely that; one side of a piece of paper with information on it.

Include a photo or two, a summary of your LO's situation, your contact information, and social media handles or website URL.

If you have 'asks' for everyone, such as letter-writing, you can include this on the one-page as well.

Have this same document in a .pdf format on your phone or computer so that you can send an electronic version after a meeting. Although you may have taken along the physical piece of paper, sending the electronic version along with a thank you for the meeting assures that it will be easy for your contact to forward the info to others.

(I typically print out three sheets per anticipated meeting and do this before I leave home. This way, extra people in a session get a copy, and if you run out, you can send anyone else a pdf.)

Info sharing on Capitol Hill – who to target

By now, you have probably contacted the Senators and Representatives in your home state, your LO's home state, etc. These people will be the core of your advocacy efforts.

Your next targets are members on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (HCFA) and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SCFR).

These committees are focused on the US relations with foreign countries and are well-versed in the complications involved with policy and politics in each. More than any other MoC, these folks will have some experience dealing with wrongful detention and hostage issues.

Reach out to every single one of the offices. Do not separate them into political party according to your or your LO's preferences. It will help if you have support for your LO on 'both sides of the aisle,' as the saying goes.

Regardless of your personal feelings about any individual, you have one goal: get your LO home. Enlist every MoC you can in that goal and stay focused on the result.

As time goes on, you will find other MoCs according to their experience or interests, but the HCFA and the SCFR are the next layers of your advocacy. Make contacts within as many staff offices as you can, and keep them on your updates list.

Additionally, ask around to find out which MoCs currently serving have also helped other detainees or hostage cases. There are likely some MoCs who can give you insight into their approach to helping get their constituents released.

Info sharing - What to say in your meetings

When you get meetings/conference calls with any MoC or staffer, you will have approximately half an hour per meeting. However, prepare for a 15-minute long session. That way, if anyone is late or needs to leave early, you have been able to say your piece.

- Introduce yourself, and explain your relationship to your LO.
- Be prepared to briefly update your contact with the facts you have right now.

  Spend no more than 5 minutes on this. Let your one-sheet fill in most of the background later.
- Briefly tell your contact what advocacy steps you have already taken.
- Then--and this is vital--ask them to do something specific for you.

Do not expect that the MoC or staffer will have the understanding that you do about the situation. Ask them to do something specific that will further your goal. They WANT you to do this. It makes their job easier.

Of course, you want your LO released, but an excellent first ask is:

Ask them to request a classified briefing with the State Department so that they can get accurate info on the case (even if they can't pass all the information on to you.)

Another reasonable ask is:

Ask them to write a letter to the Secretary of State and/or the Embassy of the foreign country, expressing their concern about the situation.

I have listed more possible asks in the Actions You Can Ask Congress to Take chapter, but these will get you started.

Make sure that if you have a one-sheet, you leave it with them. If you have business cards, leave one with each person, and take one from each person.

If possible, get the name and the email address of anyone in the meeting/on the call and add them to your contacts list. Ask if it's okay to keep them updated by email.

Research – make public information work for you

It may be beneficial to your advocacy if you can develop some knowledge about the country's politics, the US government (USG)'s foreign policy regarding that country, and how each country deals with detainees and political hostages.

Your research will be an ongoing project, and you won't become an expert overnight. Still, you will have better conversations with MoCs and the State Department if you have a good understanding of the challenges.

It is also useful to have the same level of understanding about the MoCs and other USG officials with whom you are meeting.

Google each MoC you want to contact. Their Wikipedia pages are useful because they list the committees upon which each MoC serves. Look for their picture so that you have a visual impression of the person. Often when a MoC pops into a meeting, they are going to expect that you recognize them!

Do the same with State Department and administration officials. Often there is a bio or other information on the State website. Get a sense of the person's background; it will make you more comfortable when you meet them.

You can also set up a Google alert for any term or name you would like to receive information on, should it pop up in the news.

For example, I have alerts for phrases such as:

- Paul Whelan

- Lefortovo Prison
- Mordovia
- Moscow court

This way, I can get daily or weekly updates on any news item containing those phrases. Although Google will then send me information about issues that have nothing to do with Paul, the alerts save me time and provide a broader picture of our challenges.

You can do a similar search or alert using the language where your LO is held (we search for Paul Whelan in Russian, for example, which brings up Russian news articles that mention him). These articles are often released well in advance of the English translations and may contain extra information or deliberate misinformation. Either way, data collection is an essential part of your advocacy.

I would also recommend reading accounts by past detainees and their families, whether in news articles online or in books. At the outset of your LO's wrongful detention, such reading can be challenging, as you are living your nightmare and may not want to hear about others' pain. But there will be a time when you will be open to hearing what others have experienced and how they got their LO home.

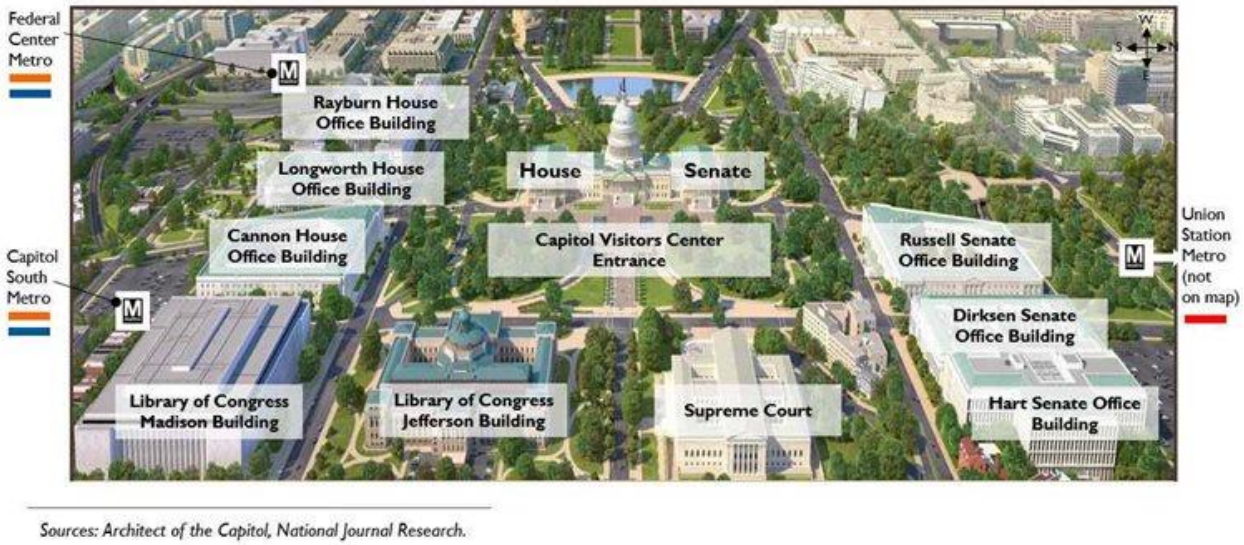
You are unfortunately now part of a small and exclusive club, that of the families of those detained or held hostage by hostile foreign countries. There are more of us than you might imagine at the outset. None of us want any other family to go through what we have experienced. When you feel up to it, search out these articles and books. You may find helpful information and and hear echoes in their pages of your own story.

Visiting Capitol Hill in person

I will never forget my first visit to Capitol Hill. My brother had been in Lefortovo prison in Moscow for two weeks, and during that time, I had hardly eaten or slept. I was shaking from nerves and lack of sleep, shot through with adrenaline, and thought I would be ill. Here are some tips I learned from those first visits, which might ease some of your anxiety during your visits to Congress.

Here is the layout of the Hill. The Senate buildings (Russell, Dirksen, and Hart) are to the

north side of the Capitol building, and the House office buildings (Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn) are to the south.



Most of your meetings will be in one of these six buildings.

Leave yourself half an hour between meetings on the same side of the Hill, and an hour between meetings where you have to cross from one side of Capitol Hill to the other. You will most likely be walking between the buildings as parking is very difficult in this area.

Try to get your meetings with Representatives (or their staffers) back-to-back, and the same with the Senator meetings, which will minimize the number of times you have to race across the Hill during the day. It will still take a few minutes to go between buildings on each side of the Hill, as you will need to find your way out of your meeting to the correct exit, walk quickly to the next building, then go through security again. (There are some tunnels, but they are confusing. I recommend against using them on your first visits unless you have an escort!)

Depending on how fast you walk, and the weather, it can take a while to get from one side of the Hill to the other. Give yourself an hour to leave the building you're in, walk across the Hill, go through security at the next building, and find the next office.

You can take a taxi across the Hill if you need to get there within a half-hour rather than an hour, but sometimes taxis get stuck in traffic even though it's just a few blocks. And especially if you don't know exactly where your next meeting is, don't cut it close.

Carry your phone with you at all times. Occasionally a staffer will contact you at the last minute and ask if you can move a meeting later or earlier. You want to be able to accommodate them if at all possible. This rescheduling is nothing personal; they do it all the time. You will notice staffers run around with notepads and phones in their hands, continually checking for updates. So when in Rome, do as the Romans. Keep an eye on your communication device and be ready to make changes in your schedule on the spur of the moment.

Know which are your most important meetings of the day. If an important contact needs to move the meeting to a slot you already have scheduled with a less critical contact, call that second office and ask if you can reschedule. (This is why I recommend being in DC for 3 or 4 days at a time, to handle these changes and to add in extra meeting opportunities that crop up.)

When you get into a building, look immediately for a wall chart or directory that shows the offices' layout. The design of each building is different, and some are complicated by on-going construction. When you get to the right floor, you can tell the MoC offices because they have flags outside. Quite useful when you are running down the hall to get to a meeting!

Travel light. You will have to go through security checks at each building. Not all are the same. Some want your coat off, your shoes off, your laptop out. Others do not. Carry the minimum, and check the USG websites to see what you can bring. If you are visiting in the summer or when a delegation is visiting, security check lines can be long, so don't dawdle when you leave a meeting, even if you think you have plenty of time.

If time is tight and you are worried about making your next meeting, ask the folks in your current session if you can have an escort to the next office. Often an intern can be found to get you to the right place using shortcuts or inter-building tunnels.

Dirksen (Senate) building, and Longworth (House) office building, both have cafeterias. They can be crowded at times, but are a place to get inexpensive beverages and food. Take advantage of these places when you can. It's easy to become fatigued if you are hungry and dehydrated. I recommend carrying a protein or breakfast bar or two with you if you don't have time to stop during the day. MoC offices will also have water and coffee. Although I rarely want to use up valuable meeting time with beverage preparation, there is usually a water cooler

available for visitors if you are early.

What to wear:

Staffers wear professional office-type clothing -- suits and ties, work attire dresses and skirts, pantsuits, etc. MoCs dress very professionally at all times. If you can, wear business-like clothing and show respect by avoiding jeans or casual attire. You want to be taken seriously by those you meet.

Wear comfortable flat shoes or boots. You will be doing a lot of walking along hard marble hallways and sidewalks.

Many women wear dark tights and ankle boots in colder weather, a great alternative to shoes with heels. When you see staffers on TV wearing stiletto heels, they often keep them under their desks! Go for comfort. You may be walking from the metro or your hotel in addition to walking from meeting to meeting.

Men - leave the ballcap at home unless it makes sense for the occasion (such as a military ballcap). Most men wear a sports coat or blazer of some kind. You don't need to look

like a CEO, but you want to look like you mean business.

Summer in DC is blazing hot. Buildings have A/C, but if possible, choose fabrics that won't wilt in the heat. Wrinkle-free fabric is your best friend.

Whatever you wear, try to look professional. After your first visit, you will have a better idea of what is appropriate.

Note: If you would like some assistance, Hostage US can attend government meetings with you to act as a note-taker and help organize you beforehand.

Follow-up (and thanks)

After your meetings (including phone calls and Zoom meetings), send a thank you email. You can do it later the same day, while you are waiting between meetings, or in the evening, or even after you get home at the end of the week.

It's important to follow-up. Not only to thank people for their time and interest in your LO, but you will also want to email in the future and check if they were able to move forward on your 'ask.' Put a note on your calendar to check back on their progress.

When you are back home, sort out those business cards and flesh out your notes. You probably scribbled during the meeting or perhaps didn't have time to take any notes at all. Before you have forgotten the details, write down who you spoke with, the date, and the basics of the conversation.

If you scribbled random words as I often do in these meetings, then write some complete sentences that you will be able to understand weeks from now.

Draw big stars or something similar by any action items that need follow up. Later I transfer these action items to post-its or a chalkboard to be a visual reminder in the days and weeks ahead.

Then start to plan for the next set of meetings and calls. Keep the ball in motion.

How friends and family can help

You may already have friends and family making offers to help. People want to 'do

something' but advocating for the wrongfully detained is a complicated business. It's hard to give people tasks that are simple and useful.

Here are a few specific ideas that you might be able to use:

- In the beginning, ask friends and family to call as many MoCs as possible (concentrate on MoCs from the same states and committees that you are contacting). They should ask what that MoC is planning to do about your LO. Tell them to call the DC office for that MoC and leave a short message. They can say something like: *"I am a friend of ---------- who has been detained in ----------, on false charges. I would like to know how Senator/Rep. ---------- plans to help bring this US citizen home."*
- They can also write letters to the MoC's DC office and send emails via the MoC's website using similar themes. They don't have to be concerned about the details of the case. Expressing concern for a US citizen in trouble and asking for the MoC's involvement will be useful.
- As time goes on, other letter-writing campaigns can include the Sec of State, the President, and the foreign country's ambassador -- many have embassies in DC.
- They can also write letters to your LO if that is possible and contribute to the GoFundMe campaign. If they live nearby, they can stay in touch with family members who might need extra help during this time.

Don't be afraid to ask if you need help, but you may find it's hard to manage too many volunteer projects, and not all will be worth the effort. Concentrate efforts on outreach to Congress as that will back up your own advocacy work.

Action Items - Outreach

- Send regular updates to contacts in government, NGO's, friends and family.
- Consider starting a website and/or Facebook page to post updates and information about your LO.
- Consider creating a Twitter account for your advocacy efforts.
- Consider starting a GoFundMe campaign to support your LO while they are wrongfully detained
- Create a one-sheet about your LO to leave behind after meetings, or send to contacts in pdf form.
- Contact MoCs in your and your LO's home state.
- Contact MoCs who sit on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.
- Keep up to date on US legislation and foreign news which might inform efforts to have your LO released.
- Ask friends, family, and supporters to also contact MoCs across the country, and to let you know who they contact.

Chapter Six:
How Government works regarding wrongful detentions

The immediate challenges

Your goal is to get the USG to use their leverage to have your LO released. To get that support, the USG needs to believe that your LO was wrongfully detained. As the process stands at this time, this leaves you in the difficult position of having to single-handedly convince the USG that your LO is worth their effort. This chapter will provide you with an overview of the workings of the USG when it comes to wrongful detentions and where you will need to insert yourself in the process.

When your LO was detained, the State Department was notified of the arrest through a diplomatic note to a US Embassy or other means. It would seem that this is the point where any sensible USG employee would immediately view the arrest of a US citizen with some degree of skepticism, considering the number of wrongful detentions that have taken place to extract concessions from the US. But this is not always the case.

If your LO was arrested in a country where the US recognizes their legal system, many US officials would choose first to respect that country's process and make the initial assumption

that your LO's arrest was valid. You know your LO better than they, but the knee-jerk reaction of many will be to assume the foreign country is right and that the US citizen has committed a crime.

Even if the US has a suspicion that the arrest is not valid, diplomatic and foreign relations create an atmosphere where immediately calling out a suspected wrong is frowned upon. There may be some vocal hand-wringing if you are lucky, but many essential voices will be silent, and real action or immediate punitive measures will be next to nil.

To get the support you need will take a multi-pronged effort on your behalf. You will need to engage with all State Department levels that you can access, as many MoC as you can manage, while also reaching out to officials on the National Security Council, other agencies, and members of the administration on up to the President.

You can't do this all at once. It's a crazy job, and you wouldn't have undertaken it if your LO wasn't in peril -- no one would.

While you are on this journey, you may or may not have to interact with the departments and agencies I mention in this chapter. Your situation may include a different mix as every case is unique, but 'forewarned is forearmed,' as they say.

US policies surrounding wrongful detentions

In previous chapters, we covered your immediate goals -- getting the word out, starting to make contacts in Congress and the State Department. Now it's time to look at the bigger picture of where to go next.

You want your LO released. Of course, what you and the USG would prefer is for the foreign country to realize the error of their ways and release your LO of their own accord, and quickly.

Likewise, careful diplomacy from the State Department's skilled diplomats can potentially shake loose a resolution to the issue.

But barring a genuine mistake, the foreign country will realize quite soon that they are holding a potentially valuable treasure for which they can get something in exchange, and it would be ridiculous of them to let your LO go. They may even have created a set-up to enable

this false arrest to take place. So begins the charade in which you now find yourself.

A wrongful detention is one in which your LO has been arrested or otherwise is being held on trumped-up charges, possibly submitted to a sham trial and sentenced to a prison term in a foreign country for a crime they did not commit. Often evidence is fabricated or non-existent.

For many years, families in our position had to wander the wilderness without any official support structure. It was an extraordinary challenge, and you can read about some of their experiences in the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation's past and present Hostage Reports (see Other Resources.)

In 2015, the Obama administration created a policy to streamline and manage for getting hostages back to the US. Known as PPD-30, it has become the basis for a robust process to help hostages and their families on many levels. PPD-30 also created the office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA, and pronounced *spee-ha* for short).

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/24/presidential-policy-directive-hostage-recovery-activities

However, unlike hostages, wrongfully detained US citizens in foreign countries have fallen into a gap in the US policy, which hostile nations are happy to exploit. There is no coordinated and forceful response to wrongful detention, such as there is for hostage-taking.

That lack of response leaves plenty of time for the hostile nation to interrogate, harass, intimidate, and coerce US citizens in attempts to extract false confessions of 'crimes.' US citizens can suffer prolonged and unreasonable pre-trial detention. After conviction and sentencing, US citizens become equivalent to poker chips. They can be hoarded and played for concessions whenever the foreign country feels like dealing.

Wrongful detention is a national security issue. As long as policies remain weak in the face of these unlawful detentions, we can expect more US families to suffer political hostage-taking of this sort.

Enter the recently-passed Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act. Named after hostage Robert Levinson, it expands the scope of PPD-30 to include wrongful detentions and provides for retaliatory actions against the offending nation.

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/712/text

This legislation is still in its infancy, and how it will be deployed is of great concern to the families of wrongful detainees. We hope that the criteria for wrongful detention and the punitive measures will speed up the process of getting help and getting results.

The best outcome is that your LO's detention gets resolved quickly. Ideally, the USG's goal is to keep your LO from becoming a SPEHA case.

But you find yourself at that point, your LO's release may hinge on successful negotiations initiated by the SPEHA and his or her counterpart in the foreign country. You will need to push to get your information in front of those who can declare your LO 'wrongfully detained.'

Why won't the USG call my LO 'wrongfully detained'?

The State Department (State) has an opaque internal process for using the designation of 'wrongful or illegal detention.' Although all the criteria are not public, with the Robert Levinson Act, there is more clarity around the issue. These are the criteria set forth in that legislation:

The Secretary of State shall review the cases of United States nationals detained abroad to determine if there is credible information that they are being detained unlawfully or wrongfully, based on criteria which may include whether--

(1) United States officials receive or possess credible information indicating innocence of the detained individual;

(2) the individual is being detained solely or substantially because he or she is a United States national;

(3) the individual is being detained solely or substantially to influence United States Government policy or to secure economic or political concessions from the United States Government;

(4) the detention appears to be because the individual sought to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote freedom of the press, freedom of religion, or the right to peacefully

assemble;

(5) the individual is being detained in violation of the laws of the detaining country;

(6) independent nongovernmental organizations or journalists have raised legitimate questions about the innocence of the detained individual;

(7) the United States mission in the country where the individual is being detained has received credible reports that the detention is a pretext for an illegitimate purpose;

(8) the individual is detained in a country where the Department of State has determined in its annual human rights reports that the judicial system is not independent or impartial, is susceptible to corruption, or is incapable of rendering just verdicts;

(9) the individual is being detained in inhumane conditions;

(10) due process of law has been sufficiently impaired so as to render the detention arbitrary; and

(11) United States diplomatic engagement is likely necessary to secure the release of the detained individual.

Still, if asked directly, State will not confirm or deny that someone is wrongfully detained until those and other internal criteria are met. The American belief that a US citizen is 'innocent until proven guilty' runs full tilt into State's unwillingness to handle the political repercussions when a foreign country is accused of falsely arresting a US citizen.

The fallout of this tip-toeing can be intense for you, your LO, and the extended family. When State prevaricates or evades the 'wrongful detention' issue, what people hear is that the USG thinks your LO is guilty as charged. You become the associate or family member of a potential criminal, and some will treat you with suspicion from the outset.

The result is that people may avoid working with the family; friends will disappear; client relationships fade away. Jobs may be lost; fewer people will want to contribute to financial campaigns or support your LO in prison. MoCs may be worried that support for your LO will tarnish their reputation and chances for re-election. Suspicion may hang over interactions you have on your LO's behalf. The administration and State Department might even choose to walk away and let the foreign country do what it will.

This nightmare will be compounded for your LO when they return. They may need to defend themselves in the court of public opinion for the rest of their lives.

Only constant, consistent, and focused advocacy on your part can help to change this dynamic. Many excellent people in the US government will care deeply about your LO's predicament. But you cannot count on the USG as a whole to do the right thing. Nothing will happen without your relentless truth-telling until your contacts finally take time to investigate for themselves. Meanwhile, your LO is subject to whatever horrors the foreign government wishes to visit upon them for months and often years.

It is an overwhelming responsibility for you to bear, but there is no sugar-coating the reality.

In our case, messy foreign relations with Russia created complications around my brother's arrest. The sensational nature of an espionage charge, and facts about Paul that painted him as a possible adventurer added to the turgid mix. Altogether it made for a media-ready sensational James Bond-type story that was far from the truth and challenging to move beyond.

Wading through all of that with each MoC and State Department official and Administration contact was a slog. It seemed that every official wanted to blame Paul somehow for his arrest. They wanted other countries to take the lead in getting him released. They wanted anyone else to deal with this problem.

Paul lost his job and apartment. Resources dwindled while the USG decided whether or not he was worth fighting for.

Two US Ambassadors to Russia have visited Paul in prison and attending his trials, showing overt support and calling for his release. The House of Representatives passed a resolution on his behalf. Paul endured a sham trial in Moscow, resulting in a ridiculous 16-year sentence in a labor camp where he now sits. Paul has support throughout the USG. This detention has been roundly condemned as a blatant travesty of justice.

Yet, the State Department still does not publicly call Paul 'wrongfully detained' and does not seem to appreciate the damage this does to the support efforts or the detainee's future

post-release. There has to be a better way.

The politics - foreign and domestic

Depending on the USG's relations with the foreign government holding your LO, your path may be aided or hindered by politics, both foreign and domestic.

On the foreign side, there may be internal power struggles that create difficulties in understanding who is in power and who can affect or negotiate your LO release. Keeping up to date on current news (and reading back about five years) will help you get a feel for the landscape.

We have found it to be helpful to stay current on the news in Russia, for example. Although State continually monitors news feeds worldwide, other branches of the government will not be up on current events. Be prepared to quickly brief government officials on pertinent points to help them understand the challenges that might be faced when working with the foreign country's diplomatic agencies, as well as openings that might be available for negotiation. Some countries might broadcast quite blatantly any exchange they are hoping to make.

A caveat here: it is VERY IMPORTANT not to start doing the foreign country's work for them. Of course, you want your LO back by any means possible, whatever the concession or trade might be that the foreign country wants. However, your LO is innocent and should be released post haste. That is the starting position, and your job in public and private communication is to hold to that position. Encourage creative options, but avoid lobbying for the foreign government's desires. That only provokes more hostage-taking and won't necessarily result in your LO's return. In other words, don't be a 'useful idiot.'

Additionally, what appears in the media and what is going on behind the scenes are often two different things. We know that Russian media is very much state-controlled, and so every bit of news that appears we view with skepticism and ask, I wonder why they released that information? Still, the reports can provide useful clues over time.

On the domestic side, back here in the US, it's a little more complicated. Learning to navigate DC comes with a lesson in political machinations. It's not a pretty sight. On Capitol Hill

and within the administration, for example, your challenges may be acute.

Naively, we thought that everyone in the USG would want to help a US citizen in trouble. The charges against Paul were ridiculous, and we could see this was setting up to be a national security issue. So we were unprepared for the stonewalling from prominent offices on Capitol Hill and the administration, even with a US citizen's life at stake.

We were also naive about the amount of lobbying that foreign countries might be doing to discourage active engagement, for both business and political reasons.

As administrations change, so will the politics. Include in your research a regular Google search for the US foreign policy towards the country in question. Make a note of which MoCs speak out for or against the foreign country's policies, and consider which officials might therefore be helpful to your LO.

Congress

Each iteration of Congress will be different as people and majorities come and go. However, certain aspects remain constant even if the players don't.

First, there will always be a House Committee on Foreign Affairs and a Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. As noted earlier, these people will be the smartest people on the issues you face.

Also, your home state and that of your LO will be the loudest advocates for your LO. Regardless of the political party, home state Senators are typically engaged on behalf of a US citizen wrongfully detained.

Congress can't get your LO released. Back before PPD-30 and the Robert Levinson Act, sometimes MoCs did try to broker a release themselves. It's still a potentially good move to have a Senator or Representative go in person to the country in question if safe to do so.

But right now, your best bet is to ask a MoC to express their concern to the State Department (in other words, to those people whose profession it is to engage with these foreign countries) and ask for them to report back.

Congress can also make public statements supporting your LO to ensure the foreign government understands that they are under scrutiny, and this wrongful detention may impede

future relations.

To the extent that you can, encourage communication between your helpful MoCs and staffers and the State Department. Although Congress loves to beat up on State, it's more useful for them to work in collaboration. One excellent move is to have State give MoCs regular briefings, which we will cover in the Actions chapters coming up. In this manner, MoCs get the latest news from a verified source, and State can concentrate their efforts on dealing with the problem at hand.

Consular Affairs and State Department

You are probably already in touch with Consular Affairs, and if not, put that at the top of your list.

And if you are, you may already be getting annoyed at what CA will or won't do to help your LO. You are sure your LO is innocent and has been falsely accused. Trying to get CA to agree with you can be frustrating.

CA is understandably cautious about the actions they are comfortable taking on the part of a US citizen detained overseas. Unfortunately, there are many more Americans who have been rightfully detained than otherwise. It is likely that your LO's claim of wrongful detention may be met with skepticism.

It certainly had been our hope that CA as a whole would be more outspoken and forward-leaning about pushing for Paul's release in the days and weeks after his detention.

At the same time, we have nothing but heartfelt gratitude for how the US Embassy in Moscow stood up for Paul's health and welfare, kept on top of issues about him, and advocated for him within the limits of their remit. The same can be said for American Citizen Services and Consular Affairs back in DC.

In fact, State employees at every level have been supportive but often aren't sure how to help or if they should help. When bureaucratic lines are drawn by State over issues about Paul, it seems to us that the default position is to draw protective lines on the side of being less helpful to families, not more.

And this is precisely where the gap in hostage vs. wrongful detainee response reveals

itself. Over time you will have MoC clamoring for your LO's release. You will have State officials supporting your LO's health and welfare and insisting that the foreign country live up to treaties and accords. What you won't have is anyone engaged explicitly in getting your LO home. And the path to getting that engagement is not clear.

There may be some behind-the-scenes diplomatic action taking place. But beyond oft-repeated phrases such as, 'We continue to raise the issue of your LO's detention,' or 'We are tracking this carefully,' details to families are scarce. As time goes on, the repetition of these phrases becomes more annoying, and for families that opacity overshadows the helpful work that CA is doing.

Keep reaching out to more senior officials in the State Department. Regardless of push back, continue to approach the Special Presidential Envoy of Hostage Affairs (see later in this chapter) so that your LO stays on the radar.

As an outsider, dealing with bureaucracy can be upsetting and cause you to lose faith in your government and their concern about the citizenry. Stay focused. Continue with your campaign of persistent info-sharing. Do not let up. Keep telling everyone what is happening to your LO.

The National Security Council

As stated on the White House website, the National Security Council (NSC)is "...is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. Since its inception under President Truman, the Council's function has been to advise and assist the President on national security and foreign policies. The Council also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies."

Tied in with the NSC is the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC). The HRFC is an interagency group with representatives from across the government brought together under a single organization, led by FBI and State. Physically, it is located in the FBI Headquarters in DC, and its role is to effect the release of US citizens held hostage around the world, and support their families.

The Hostage Response Group (HRG) regularly meets to coordinate the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held abroad. Its regular members include the Director of the HRFC, the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator, and representatives from the Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, FBI, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and other agencies as needed.

Hostage-taking, wrongful detentions for political purposes (political hostage-taking), and other such activities threaten US national security. Your LO's unlawful detention is not merely a judicial matter. It is a potential attempt by a hostile foreign country to exact concessions from the US. The NSC tracks wrongful detention cases once they have been made aware that State considers your LO's case to have merit. Release of a detainee will undoubtedly require a great deal of decision-making at the NSC and supporting working level.

Depending upon who is the National Security Advisor (NSA), this person or their staff may be a useful conduit to bringing your LO to the attention of the President and other key people in the administration.

However, detailees to the NSC from the State Department or other agencies may also have useful expertise. For example, there will be experts on loan from State and detailees from the US military branches who may have a clearer understanding of your LO's situation. The broader your info-sharing, the more likely it will be that people at the NSC will discuss your LO.

Your job is to make contacts and info-share. As with all of your government interactions, you will not be able to direct action yourself, but you can supply the information needed to get these conversations and activities started. Efforts such as negotiations are likely to stem from decision-making by the NSA and the NSC.

DOJ, Treasury and other agencies

The Department of Justice, the US Treasury, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other agencies that make up the US government often have a role to play in wrongful detentions and hostage scenarios.

Depending on your LO's detention circumstances, there may be opportunities as time goes on to reach out to these agencies yourself to info-share and ask for them to participate in

developing creative solutions.

As a rule, the USG has a policy against paying ransom for hostages in a literal sense and making blatant exchanges that might encourage more wrongful detentions and hostage-taking. While sensible on one level, it is not at all helpful for those already detained. It does little to prevent further false arrests. And the reality is more nuanced.

Wrongful detentions for political purposes are the result of failures in diplomatic relations. By the time a country resorts to political hostage-taking, grievances between the countries have become entrenched. Heading off these kinds of situations requires a robust and effective State Department that relies on career diplomats' expertise. A healthy State Department is an essential component of a whole-of-government national security stance.

When the State Department is continuously hollowed out and remolded at the behest of an administration's political machinations, it becomes difficult for diplomats to maintain the trust of their counterparts around the world. Whether the US or the foreign country is to blame at any given moment, broken promises, shattered treaties, shifting alliances, imposed sanctions, and perceived slights and grievances create an atmosphere ripe for retaliation against innocent US citizens.

And all too often, the State Department finds its hand forced on many fronts as corrupt powers try to exert influence in unacceptable ways. However, as a world power, it is to the US's advantage to maintain the most substantial diplomatic ties possible worldwide, advancing US interests and resolving disputes before petty retaliation occurs.

Solving these issues is not something that families of the wrongfully detained should have to deal with; regardless, these breakdowns in diplomacy up-end our lives in no small way. By the time our LO's are caught in a foreign country's vise, the list of grievances, expulsion of diplomats, removal of embassies, and other such impediments to civil discourse have reached a fever pitch. These become stumbling blocks we all have to climb over to get our LO's home.

But take heart; these irritants and grievances can also be very helpful to your cause. Do some research and see what has been said by the foreign country's leaders, particularly anything mentioned since your LO's detention. Does the foreign press talk about previously perceived wrongs such as sanctions, foreign nationals in US jails, treaties about which they are

concerned, etc.?

Keep a running list of these items and remind your contacts in the USG about them. These issues are all potential paths to easing tensions and getting your LO back home. It could be that some minor problem solved is enough to get justice for your LO.

NOTE: it is beneficial to add-on a translation feature to your browser when you are searching online. Look up the translation of your LO's name in the foreign language, and then search for that (we searched for Pol Uilan or Пол Уилан); you will find articles that may not have made it to the Western media in their original form. Using the browser add-on, you can read these stories in English, which might provide you with more material.

SPEHA

To get the best sense of the role of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, take a look at policy document PPD-30, which created the position and outlines the function of the office when it comes to family engagement.

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/24/presidential-policy-directive-hostage-recovery-activities

Accessing the SPEHA on behalf of your LO can take some time. In our case, 14 months of outreach, 15 visits to DC, and countless letters and emails and phone calls with people throughout government were necessary before the SPEHA office would talk to us.

Within two months of Paul's arrest, we had learned of PPD-30 and realized that Paul fell into a gap that this policy did not specifically cover but should. Regardless, we knew that the SPEHA office was the likely destination for Paul's case if diplomatic means had not persuaded the Russian Federation to release Paul in a timely fashion.

During those 14 months, three different people and accompanying staff have occupied the position of SPEHA. The first SPEHA would not engage with our family at all, for reasons unknown. The second finally agreed to phone calls and in-person meetings but did not show up to any of them. His chief of staff kindly met with me once and told me that the SPEHA office usually did not meet with any family whose LO was not declared 'wrongfully detained.'

In other words, a family does not get an opportunity to plead their case to the SPEHA directly; they must rely on others within the State Department and NSC to do that, using opaque criteria.

It is my sincere hope that at the time you are reading this resource guide, your path to getting help for your LO will be a lot smoother than was ours. If not, you may find yourself stuck in a similar Catch-22, and you may be left as we were, to run around DC doing all you can to poke at the office from every direction until someone pays attention.

The fact remains that right now, there is no existing process via which the USG will engage to help your LO get home if SPEHA isn't involved. CA can't negotiate for your LO's release, and neither can Congress. The President might activate SPEHA, but it can take months before a family gets anywhere near the White House, and even then, engagement isn't guaranteed.

The State Department will most likely attempt to create the right conditions for a release via diplomatic channels long before SPEHA is needed. But failing that, there is no formal process to work for a wrongfully detained US citizen's freedom other than that followed by SPEHA.

My advice to you is to never, ever give up. It took us 14 months and three personnel changes before we finally got the help Paul needed, but get it, we did.

And your LO may be more fortunate than our brother. By talking to everyone about your LO, the USG might find another path to effect their release long before SPEHA is needed. That is the hope of every family. By the time you read this, more effective processes at earlier stages in wrongful detentions may be in place.

If the SPEHA group does engage in your LO's case, a crack team of professionals is working on your LO's behalf. We cannot speak highly enough of the dedicated team we have encountered at the SPEHA level and their corresponding helpers across the inter-agency and NSC.

The President

Every family member wants the US President to speak words of support for their

wrongfully detained LO and get them home.

The media and members of the public and MoCs will ask you if the President has spoken to you or is taking any action on your LO's behalf. It can be challenging to know how to respond if the President has made no expression of concern or action.

You may want to write to the President, their Chief of Staff and Executive Assistant, and other people in the administration who may have the President's ear to ask for an opportunity to meet.

Even if you do not get the meeting you have requested, there is a good chance that your letters will result in having your LO's case discussed at a high level.

In our case, we did not meet with the President but had a substantive meeting with the NSA and other experts on the NSC staff, which became a significant step forward in our advocacy for Paul. It was useful and comforting to make these new contacts at the operational level.

They are a myriad of factors that the President and the State Department must consider when contemplating a public statement. We often heard the rationale that if a high-level official speaks out about a wrongful detention, there may be the risk of increasing the detainee's value, complicating or protracting future negotiations.

A President or an administration may privately fear that they do not have the leverage to make a bold statement and get your LO released on that alone.

Alternately, they may have sufficient leverage but be concerned that the necessary deal-making would be unpopular with the public or within the USG.

Whatever the rationale, silence from the top levels runs the risk of prolonging your LO's wrongful detention and undermining support at home. It will seem to the foreign country that there is no downside to holding your LO indefinitely. And both your LO and their supporters may feel cast adrift.

If you have asked to speak with the President and that request is denied or ignored, take heart. Keep info-sharing at whatever level you can, and continue to enlarge your network.

If you do get a chance to speak to the President or any high-ranking official, save the photo op for when your LO returns. Focus your meeting on the plan to get your LO home.

Preventing wrongful detentions

The question remains: how to put a stop to wrongful detention and hostage-taking? It would take an attitude in the US that put US citizens first, at every level, so that all US interactions globally were predicated on wrongfully detained US citizens' safe return.

But while elected officials, political appointees, and business people continue to strike lucrative deals with hostile foreign governments despite that country's offenses towards US citizens, this practice of hostage-taking and retaliation will continue.

We are a long way from seeing a whole-of-US attitude towards wrongful detention realized. So for the moment, working with various agencies across the USG may become part of the response in your LO's case.

Your role as a family member when interacting with any agency must be clear: you want agencies, the NSC, the State Department, etc., to work together as creatively as possible to get your LO home. It's best not to tie your LO to any one solution.

And here's why: say you hear that the foreign country wants sanctions relief and has signaled that if that happened, they might release your LO. Naturally, you would also be keen to have sanctions relief for that country and as quickly as possible. You would want to march over to the US Treasury and make sure they know all about your LO, which is a perfectly understandable action to take.

By all means, talk to anyone you can about your LO. However, it is essential to remember that you don't want to be acting as an unpaid lobbyist for that foreign country, carrying their water for them. If you advocate for that sanctions relief as if it were the only solution, you run the risk of creating a false equivalency between your LO and the sanctions relief. By tying the two outcomes together, you may hurt your LO's chances of being released for some other, more straightforward agreement.

Likewise, a foreign country's representative, such as a lawyer or retired diplomat, may approach you and suggest a joint and possibly public effort towards an exchange. Be very cautious about any such approach. It would be best if you were on high-alert and immediately discuss the proposed action's possible ramifications with State. Don't buy the car without looking underneath the hood! The suggested action might run counter to some other action

being taken by the USG behind-the-scenes and interfere with your LO's chances of release.

First and foremost, your LO has been WRONGFULLY detained. Meaning, they are innocent of the charges against them. Therefore, there should not need to be an exchange of any sort, only a release of your LO.

Stick firmly to this messaging, while encouraging both countries and US agencies to broaden their discussion and come to some creative agreement.

Third-party interlocutors

Suppose you can't get the SPEHA to take the case, and the USG is having trouble making headway or is not engaging to help your LO.

It may be time to discuss your situation with 3rd party negotiators such as a retired Ambassador, diplomat, businessperson, or Congressman. He or she might be willing to act as an interlocutor with the foreign government.

On occasion, a third party can establish a back-channel that opens up discourse not possible via usual diplomatic means.

These are complicated and potentially expensive maneuvers with no guarantee of success. The foreign government wants what the USG can give them, and no other party will have the means to make those promises.

Talk to a third party that already works with the USG on detainee and hostage cases, such as the Richardson Center for Global Engagement (see Other Resources for more information). Ultimately, the USG will need to be involved in getting your LO home.

Action Items - the USG

- Research where different MoCs stand on relations with the foreign country in question, and use that information to help decide who to ask for help.
- Avoid advancing the foreign country's agenda in your desire to have your LO released.
- Encourage communication between your helpful MoCs and staffers and the State Department via briefings and other means.
- Keep reaching out to more senior officials in the State Department.
- Approach the office of the Special Presidential Envoy of Hostage Affairs.
- Grow your contact network to include staff working with the National Security Council.
- Keep a running list of grievances the foreign country has with the US and remind your contacts about these possible avenues for negotiation.
- Add a translation feature to your browser to use when you are searching online or reading foreign media. Search for your LO's name in the foreign language.
- Consider asking for a meeting with the President.
- If necessary, reach out to third party interlocutors who might help with communications behind the scenes.

Chapter Seven:
Actions you can ask Congress to take

Writing letters to Embassies, State, NSC, President

Members of Congress and their staff will expect you to have an 'ask' for them; in other words, something specific you would like them to do.

It is always helpful to have letters written by MoCs to crucial players. You can ask anyone to write a letter; however, there is an unspoken hierarchy within Congress that is helpful to understand.

For example, Congress expects that letters will be primarily written by the Senators of your LO's home state, with Representatives also signing the same letters.

Or a Representative from one party might want an appropriate Representative from another party to co-write a letter so that the approach is bi-partisan.

Ask for a letter and ask for the advice of the MoC; find out who is the best person to act as the letter's primary author. The MoC may suggest that someone else would be a better lead, but if this MoC is willing to co-sign the letter, mention that when you talk to others.

If a letter has already been agreed to by someone, you can then ask other MoC's if they would be willing to co-sign, and so on.

Ask for letters to be sent to:

- US Ambassadors, to show support for your LO and ask for an update or briefing within a certain number of days.
- The foreign country's Ambassador or Consulate in DC, expressing concern about your LO.
- The State Department (Secretary of State or another official) to express concern and request a response or a briefing.
- The NSC or the President, expressing concern and a desire to see action on behalf of your LO.

Discuss with any MoC other potential letter recipients; their experience in these matters can guide your efforts.

Ask for a copy of the letter to be sent to you (typically, an office will do this anyway, in pdf form) and ask if it's appropriate to share it with the media.

Don't make the letter public if the MoC considers it private correspondence, as might be the case with letters within the USG. And the MoC may wish to release news of any message or statement themselves, via their own press office. If so, ask to be updated so that you can amplify their response.

Resolutions

A resolution is a bill that does not become a law. It is an expression of a particular viewpoint that the House and Senate hold on a matter. It is a useful signal to a foreign power.

For wrongful detainees, a resolution can be a powerful statement to the foreign government that Congress is watching what is happening and is expressing their concern in a very concrete manner.

Here are some examples of resolutions past and present on behalf of US citizens wrongfully detained overseas:

A resolution calling on the Government of the Russian Federation to provide evidence or to release United States citizen Paul Whelan.:

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/552

A resolution calling for the immediate release of Trevor Reed, a United States Citizen who was unjustly sentenced to 9 years in a Russian prison.

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/1115

Calling for the unconditional release of United States citizens and legal permanent resident aliens being held for political purposes by the Government of Iran:

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/187

Zero Tolerance for Unlawful Detentions of United States Citizens in Lebanon Act:

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/3327

A resolution usually originates with a MoC in your LO's home state. It is OK to write a rough draft based on these examples above and present it to one or two of your MoCs to gauge their interest.

A resolution is not put into play immediately. It's more useful after diplomatic efforts have reached a standstill. Both House and Senate can present resolutions for protesting a wrongful detention, and the language for both pieces of legislation is often similar.

In our case, Paul's Michigan Representative Haley Stevens initiated a resolution six months into Paul's imprisonment in Russia. The Congresswoman's staff then got other Representatives to sign on.

Here are the steps for a resolution:

- A rough draft is written, often by the foreign policy staff of a MoC.
- Potential co-sponsors are asked to join on. Often each co-sponsor wants to approve and make changes to the text, which can slow things down.
- At some point, the MoC says enough, and the resolution goes to the House or Senate foreign relations committee for 'mark-up.'
- Only a certain number of pieces of legislation get marked up at a time. Mark-ups are scheduled every few months so that a resolution can wait a while at this point. Ask your MoC foreign policy staffers to keep you updated as to progress.
- Mark-up involves the HCFA or the SCFR reviewing the language, checking for accuracy

with others such as the State Department, and updating the language to reflect recent events.

- After mark-up, the resolution is voted on in committee to see if it should go to the House (or Senate) floor for a vote.
- If everyone agrees, the resolution then waits for the House or Senate Majority Leader to add it to the vote schedule.
- A resolution can sit at this spot for a while if there are more pressing matters. If there is an urgent need for the resolution, you can press your case with the House or Senate Majority Leader or ask the originating MoC to do so.
- Not all legislation gets heard on the floor during a Congressional session, which can be discouraging. If your resolution does not make it to the floor, ask your MoC what you need to do to re-introduce it in the next congressional session.

Often, voting on a resolution of this kind is done by voice vote. There is unlikely to be a debate, and MoC's do not need to be on the floor in person to vote. However, some MoCs might make a statement on behalf of your LO. You can watch the speech and vote in person or on C-SPAN, a public service station that televises many proceedings of the United States federal government.

Whether or not a resolution gets to vote, in the long run, it indicates a level of engagement and concern on the part of the USG.

Legislation that is helpful to the cause

Take some time to look for other pieces of legislation in process that might be helpful to your LO over the longterm.

For example, the Robert Levinson Act was introduced three months after Paul's arrest and had been in the works for many months before. I stumbled across the Levinson Act when searching www.congress.gov using terms such as 'prisoner,' 'detainee,' 'hostage,' 'Russia,' 'sanctions,' etc.

I was interested in the text of any pertinent legislation, in addition to seeing which MoCs were sponsors and co-sponsors. I surmised that those same MoCs might also be sympathetic to

Paul's case if I approached them.

I then became an unofficial lobbyist for the Levinson Act! We realized right away that this legislation would be useful for Paul or future detainees. As I went from MoC to MoC info-sharing about Paul, I also mentioned the Levinson Act and asked for the MoC's support.

The fact it existed also spoke eloquently to the gap into which Paul had fallen -- and which the Levinson Act was designed to fill. And although it seemed in those early months that Paul might be out long before the Robert Levinson Act passed, that proved not to be the case. Paul is still incarcerated, and the Levinson Act has become a reality.

You may find that digging around www.congress.gov helps you see what other legislation applies to the situation or country your LO is in, as well as possible helpful MoCs for your quest.

Ask to meet with those MoCs to share info and learn about their role in the legislation in light of your LO's predicament. Their expertise might spark some new ideas or connections for your LO's case.

Briefings

One of the many aspects of working with the USG that we found surprising was the need to be the conduit of information between Congress and the State Department.

First, most MoC does not know what to do when a constituent has been wrongfully arrested. Only a small number of MoCs currently serving are experienced in advocating for a US citizen in dire straits overseas. But the number of these detentions is rising, and Congress needs a better way to respond.

These days, when a family approaches Congress about a LO, they may be asked to provide guidance as to what the MoC should do next. It's a terrible strain on a family who are beside themselves with anxiety and don't know the first thing about getting results in DC.

Inexperienced Congressional staffers and MoCs are eager to help but have no idea who to contact at State to get information quickly. Likewise, some employees at the State Department do not fully grasp the political nuances of working with MoCs. It then falls to the family to weave these entities together in a useful manner by introducing key players to one

other.

The best way you can do this is to ask the State Department to give regular briefings to MoC about your LO. Initially, this will be to a small audience of MoCs from your LO's home state, but ask that members of the HCFA and SCFR be included, along with anyone else you think is engaged on your LO's behalf. Staffers or MoCs may attend the briefing calls; either is fine and gets the job done.

Initially, you may be involved in helping build interest in the briefing on the Congressional side and commitment to having a briefing on the State Dept side. If your LO's detention is ongoing, each of these entities may become more proactive over time and relieve you of this burden.

Either way, the juice is worth the squeeze, as they say. The MoCs will be getting the info directly from State without you as a go-between, and it provides them with an opportunity to ask State the tough questions (and possibly get answers.)

It also lays the groundwork for the two entities to work together. As the situation develops, Congress may be able to take actions or make statements to show support in a way that dovetails with State's efforts.

This type of direct communication and trust is essential in keeping support in Congress at a useful level for State as they move forward and for MoC and staffers to better understand how to work with State in these delicate situations.

Visit the foreign country

Depending on the location of your LO and the USG's policies, it may be advantageous for a MoC to visit the foreign country and attempt to see your LO or a foreign dignitary to advance the conversation.

The possibility of travel will depend entirely on the specifics of your LO's situation. Still, many MoCs (particularly in the House) underestimate their power and the impression it makes on foreign countries to have a MoC travel to show support for a US citizen.

Travel is certainly a point to discuss and in particular with MoC from your LO's home state.

Typically, Congressional travel is coordinated with the State Department, and there is no guarantee that the mission or request for visas will meet with success. In Paul's case, Russia denied visas for both a Senator and a Representative who tried to visit Paul in his first year of detention. But the request made a point; the US was concerned about Paul Whelan and was not going to forget about the situation.

Ask for a report

MoC's can request informative reports from the Congressional Research Services, a division of the Library of Congress, which they can then share with constituents.

One way to broaden your MoC's understanding of your LO's detention is to ask your MoC to request a CRS report on subjects such as:

- How many US citizens have been wrongfully detained in the country where your LO is?
- What were the charges?
- What was the outcome of their trials?
- Average sentencing?
- Where have their sentences been served?
- What is the US track record for getting these citizens released?
- How many US citizens are in jail in that country in total?

The point of asking for these reports is not just for the information for you, but to get information that the MoC will know is verified and which you can then share with other MoCs to make your points about your LO's situation. As the info comes from a Congressional report, it will carry more weight.

You may find that the Privacy Act, classified information, and other USG policies get in the way of your receiving a satisfactory report with robust data you can use. If this happens, work with whatever information you receive and potentially ask another MoC if they would try to obtain a more granular report themselves. Just the act of seeking this information will create interest in your LO's case within the MoC's office.

Action items - Congress

- Ask MoCs if they would write letters to US Ambassador, the foreign Ambassador, the US Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and the President.
- Ask MoCs to sponsor a resolution on your LO's behalf.
- Research other pieces of legislation that might be helpful to your LO using www.congress.gov
- Ask MoCs to request briefings about your LO from State, the NSC, and pertinent agencies.
- Talk to your MoC about the possibility of visiting the foreign country in support of your LO.
- Ask MoCs if they could request informative reports on particular from the Congressional Research Services.

Chapter Eight:
Actions you can ask Consular Affairs to take

Consular staff visit to your loved one

A consular officer may be able to visit your LO, depending on where they are being held. They may be able to take food and supplies to your LO, according to the prison rules.

At the same time, the foreign country is likely to be as difficult as possible and not allow access to your LO, to delay mail and supplies delivery, to refuse or ignore requests to visit the prison, etc.

Consular officers and staff representing the US in foreign countries are dedicated and professional, with a core belief in working for US citizens despite roadblocks placed in their way by hostile powers. Their level of commitment to the concerns of US citizens has been gratifying.

Do all you can to support these folks, and ask for as much information as they can provide to you over non-secure phone lines to understand the political climate in which they are working. Each country has its arrangement with the US, some better and some worse.

The State Department also has strict guidelines that the staff must work within. If you get frustrated, ask your contacts to help connect you with other diplomatic staff who might be able to explain or answer your questions more thoroughly.

Regular update calls

Consular Affairs has specific mandates, and many State Department lawyers telling them what they can and can't do to help US citizens abroad. For example, they can provide a list of lawyers but can't vet those lawyers or make suggestions to your LO as to which to choose.

It is best to think of CA's role as being that of 'care and feeding.' The treatment of your LO is their primary concern. It will take pressure higher up than CA to get anyone to work for your LO's release.

Do ask them to provide you with information about any outreach the USG has made on your LO's behalf, such as information they have uncovered about the arrest and charges. They can inform you of potential visits consular staff might make to your LO, complaints made to the country's foreign office, or diplomatic forays to open lines of communication that might result in the release of your LO.

If there is a US Embassy in the country, you are likely to receive regular phone calls to ask questions and receive information about your LO.

If there is no Embassy or diplomatic efforts with that country are at a low ebb, it may be difficult for the State Department to either get information or establish with whom they should be speaking. Each wrongful detention case is different, and some are particularly difficult to resolve due to the political aspect.

Either way, ask Consular Affairs to detail what, exactly, they can do to help your family and your LO and ask for regular calls to keep you in the loop about actions to be taken on behalf of your LO.

You may eventually be able to speak with staff working on the country's Desk where your LO is detained or with others who have worked on similar cases in the past.

The State Department is the place to get and to share the latest information about your LO. Regularly scheduled calls will keep your LO top of mind, even when there is little new information.

In many cases, you will be the one providing complete information to Consular Affairs or sharing useful facts about your LO. Often you will have the latest word from the Embassy,

which hasn't yet circulated through the mammoth buildings in DC. Keep the lines of communication open to the best of your ability. Continue to emphasize that your LO is a person, a real US citizen in need of help, and not just a 'case' in a computer file.

Action Items - Consular Affairs

- Work with Consular Affairs and American Citizen Services staff to get information to and from your LO.
- Ask consular officers if they can visit your LO.
- Ask for regular calls to keep you updated on your LO's health and well-being.
- Ask Consular Affairs to detail what, exactly, they can do to help your family and your LO.

Chapter Nine:
Politics – realities of an ever-changing landscape

US foreign policy

Changing political winds will color every interaction you have concerning your LO. Do some research to help you communicate effectively about your LO's case.

If you enjoy reading, look for recent pertinent books about the foreign country and its politics.

If you are not a reader, ask foreign policy staffers if they might give you a briefing on the country in question and corresponding US policy. They will point you in the right direction to get some insights.

Likewise, think tanks like the Brookings Institute are full of experts on foreign policy and are typically happy to share their knowledge. You can phone up and ask for help.

YOU can also search the internet and news media, being careful that you are getting your information from top-tier sources.

Finally, there are Congressional Services reports your MoC can ask for to get more detailed information from the State Department on US foreign policy. Once they receive the report, they are free to share the contents with you in most cases.

You will find helpers at every level

Do take a bi-partisan approach to your advocacy and outreach, and as you network, include supportive people at any level. You may want the attention of the MoC or the Secretary of State. Still, the Legislative Aide, the professional staffer, the consular officer, and assistants at all levels get the work done. They will provide you with the best insights and networking help.

Make every person who expresses support part of your network. Ask if you can add them to your email list or if someone in their office should be on your list. Keep info-sharing when you have news, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need an introduction. It may seem that people in your network rarely respond to your group emails and you may not see them in person again, but that doesn't mean they don't care and aren't discussing your LO's predicament with others.

Keep a positive attitude and be relentlessly friendly with everyone you encounter in the USG. Many people will want to help. You never know who will end up advocating for you in unexpected ways or at a crucial juncture in your journey.

Helpful and unhelpful members of Congress

Congress is a vast beehive of interesting and interested folks working for the American people. It's heart-warming to see! There are lots of go-getters and staffers committed to being helpful to their constituents.

However as you connect with MoCs and their staff, it will be good for your mental health to realize that just as there are 535 MoCs, there are also 535 viewpoints. Any of the following scenarios are possible (and I have encountered them all):

- The MoC or staffer sympathizes with you and your LO, feels strongly that a wrong has been committed, and will do all they can to help you. If a staffer, they will passionately promote your case to their MoC. These MoCs and their staffers will be a constant source of help in the weeks and months ahead.
- The MoC or staffer sympathizes with you and your LO but is reluctant to get involved due to their party/the administration's position on some aspect of the case or the country concerned. They keep their options open, and the staffers

may engage with you and help you regardless.

- MoC or staffer may not care one way or another about you and your LO but senses that supporting you might prove valuable in an upcoming election. They keep their options open, and the staffers may stay in touch but not actively help unless it seems useful.
- The MoC or staffer doesn't sympathize with you and your LO for some reason or may pretend they will show support but does not. They may believe some sensational piece of news they have read about your LO to the exclusion of facts. They may be dismissive and even rude or may actively block support for you. Not worth spending time on this sort.
- The MoC or staffer won't meet or speak to you at all, won't answer emails or calls, even if they have met or spoken with you before. You will likely never know why. Also not worth spending your time on these people.

It also took me several months before I realized that other lobbyists--possibly representing the foreign country's interests--may be lobbying against the MoC's involvement for economic and political reasons.

It is very hard not to take negative results personally. The negative encounters can overpower your faith in those who ARE standing with you, leaving you with a cynical view of your government.

If you find yourself reeling from an encounter with one of the worst, do your best to remind yourself of all the great people you have encountered in your journey, and put the loser to the side. Concentrate on the positive steps you have made.

There are many more MoCs who will be glad you came to tell them about your LO, so yes, get back out there, knock on a few more doors. In the long run, you will be happy you did.

Note: Keep in mind that if you would like some assistance, Hostage US can attend government meetings with you to act as a note-taker and help organize you beforehand.

Helpful and unhelpful State Department employees

The State Department deals in diplomacy and nuance, and to communicate with many of State's employees, you will have to develop an ear for their language and concerns.

Few State employees will be outright unhelpful. On the whole, and particularly at the operational level, they are a fascinating and engaging group of people, open to dealing with issues and customs worldwide. Simultaneously, to people like us who are unfamiliar with their rules and regulations, it can seem as if any interaction with State merely results in being told 'no' in various polite ways.

Some elevate diplomatic language to high art. I joked to one official for whom I have great respect that I felt terrific when I left his office after a meeting but couldn't pin down exactly what we talked about! That's very useful in diplomatic arenas, I am sure, but it can be frustrating to a family member needing help and answers.

So I suggest that you go into meetings with State with a specific set of questions. If you get wishy-washy responses, continue to ask the questions in as many ways as possible to extract the maximum allowable information. Do all you can to get all your questions answered.

Try to anticipate the evasive and formulaic responses and phrase your questions to avoid 'yes' or 'no' answers.

Over time, you will get used to the State Department's way of communicating, and you will develop a level of trust with officials involved in your LO's case. You will find that officials are more open with you and will often hint broadly at an answer in a way that allows you to read between the lines.

Try to jot down as many notes as you can during your meeting to recreate your conversation's details later. Before you go to bed that evening, flesh out your notes before you forget them. There is often nuance in how a State Department official explains a point that becomes more apparent to you at a later reading, so pay attention to details.

Helpful and unhelpful members of the administration

The higher up the ladder you go, the more partisan politics will rear its ugly head. As you enter a world almost wholly formed of political appointees, you will encounter both the very

knowledgeable and the very uninformed, as well as intense departmental power struggles and empire-building. It can be difficult for an outsider, a regular citizen, to navigate these choppy waters. But there are plenty of wonderful, caring people working in the administration. It may useful to ask the State Department, a MoC, or one of the NGOs, to connect you with someone helpful.

If a person within the administration has agreed to meet with you, they are open to your info-sharing but have little time to problem-solve for you. It is a mistake to think you can drop the problem of your LO's wrongful detention at the feet of someone in the administration and have them pick it up and run with it. Instead, you will need to follow that tried and true maxim of presenting solutions along with your problems.

For example, when we met with the National Security Advisor (NSA), we didn't just say, 'Please bring Paul home!' That would have been useless and would have resulted in being patted kindly on the head (figuratively speaking) rather than in any substantive action.

Instead, one ask was for help getting support from key members of Congress, asking them to press the State Department on our brother's behalf; very doable. Because of our info-sharing and reasonable asks, we got the ear of the NSA, and he decided of his own accord to push our LO's cause further up the ladder.

However, this situation could have gone the other way for no fault of ours. A member of the administration will weigh the merits of the case against high-level foreign policy problems, re-election concerns, the expenditure of political capital, etc. Your LO may be the most incredible person in the world and still not get support from some administration officials. There may be nerves involved, cold feet, job insecurity, or merely a lack of understanding of the merits case.

Do not give up. Continue to info-share with any staff or officials who will accept your incoming email or calls. Bringing home hostages and the wrongfully detained is a big political win for any administration. It will always be looked on favorably by the general public. A time may come when the current administration decides that this favorable impression would be useful and puts the wheels in motion to get your LO home.

When they won’t respond – what to do

One of the most heart-wrenching aspects of advocating for your LO will be facing the unreturned calls, the unanswered emails, or the requests for meetings that are ignored or turned down.

One approach is to request a meeting with someone in a lateral position or the next rung down. For example, if the Secretary of State won't meet with you, perhaps you might have more luck asking to meet the Deputy SoS, or an Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary. Just because you want to speak to the top dog does not make any of the people in these other positions less effective. They may have much more experience and know-how about wrongful detentions and the problems you are facing.

Often instead of outright turning you down, a request to see one high-level official results in an offer to meet with someone else. This is a great result! A meeting is a meeting and an opportunity for you to advance your LO's cause.

If your request gets rejected, there's no harm in trying again. But there are hundreds of MoCs, hundreds of State Department employees, dozens of people working with and around the NSC and administration, etc. It might be better to take a deep breath and try again with someone else.

Emails that aren't answered fall into a slightly different category. If they were requests for information you need, then ask those same questions of someone else. You can mention that you tried with person X but have not yet heard a response. Sometimes this will shake loose some engagement. Sometimes you won't be able to get any traction at all within a section of government or an MoC's office.

It's hurtful and depressing, and even worse, you will have to put on a brave face and act as if everyone you are encountering is helpful and supportive. But if you persist, over time, the number of people who DO engage with you will vastly outnumber those who don't. Keep your meeting requests realistic, keep your expectations in check, and keep knocking on doors.

Elections and personnel churn

Throughout your work with the USG, MoCs, staff, and officials of all stripes will come and go at an alarming rate. Churn is the term used to describe this movement, and in a 24/7 environment like federal DC, there is churn like no other.

You may find yourself having to re-educate incoming officials, which can be a nuisance when you had the previous person's support and are not sure you can gain the ear of the next.

Do your best to keep track of who is where. In most cases, if a staffer has moved on without your knowledge, your email to them will bounce back with a message that includes the contact info of their replacement. Get in touch with that person immediately with an offer to info-share or add them to your email list to get the same updates as their predecessor.

If there's a new MoC or department head, ask one of their staff when it might be appropriate to reach out. Keep an eye on new political appointees' background -- the new person might be a better candidate to help you than the previous occupant.

In other words, accept the churn and build a network with enough variety of contacts that you are not entirely dependent on the fate of one individual. Factors beyond your control will be in play daily, and you will be able to weather the changes if you have a diverse network.

Action items - politics

- Research US relations with the foreign country.
- Take a bi-partisan approach to your advocacy so that you are talking to MoCs on both sides of the aisle.
- When you encounter unhelpful people in the USG, take heart and knock on some more doors.
- Keep ongoing lists of questions in your notebook to ask of MoCs and State Department officials.
- Accept the churn and continue to build a diverse build a network.

Chapter Ten:
Keeping track of your efforts

Maintaining spreadsheets

A little organization goes a long way. Maintain lists of your contacts, your meetings with officials and staffers, and do it in a way that you can update without too much hassle.

Suggested methods include Google docs and spreadsheets, Word docs and spreadsheets, or if you prefer not using a computer for your record-keeping, 3-hole binders will do the job.

In the first few weeks, it isn't easy to be organized. You have so much to learn and so much anxiety about your LO. At some point when you can take a breath, however, start compiling your contact info and meeting info in a manner that will make sense to you months from now.

When you get home from meetings, when you get off the phone or the conference call, update your list with new contacts.

When you meet people in person, collect those business cards! When you are back home, use them to update your lists. (And if you have business cards of your own, take them to meetings with you.)

Names, email addresses, and phone numbers are essential pieces of information to

collect, followed by records of who you have spoken to or met and when.

Organizing your email and computer files

When any wrongful detention occurs, we all hope for our LO's immediate freedom. Some detainees are just that lucky and get out soon after their arrest. Other cases drag on for months, and then those months turn into years.

As your advocacy efforts expand and your network grows, so will your research and the amount of material you have compiled.

My filing system might not work for someone else, but if someone asks me for a letter or a pdf, I know where to find it. I file new materials as soon as I get them. I use Google Docs and OneNote, Excel and Word documents, plus computer folders on my PC, but printouts in manila folders would work just as well.

I download photos of my brother, make pdfs of articles that appear online, save pdfs of letters officials have written on his behalf, save research about Russia, the prisons, etc. And I file as I go.

Create a system you can manage, and stick with it. You need to keep track of information to support your efforts, and you will want to share some of this information with your LO when they return. You might as well make it easy to find!

Your emails will need to be sorted in some manner, as well. I use a simple system; there's a folder for Congress, for the State Dept, for supporters, for each NGO, etc. I don't get too detailed, but I do drop every email into the right folder. I have thousands of emails now that pertain to Paul, too many to sort through if I let them pile up.

And to keep things simple, I use the same folder names for the folders on my computer. I don't need two systems, just a straightforward approach that I can use in two locations.

There is an added benefit to this organization. At some point, your LO will be free, and this chapter of your lives will close. Keeping these records and emails separate from the rest of your life is a personal statement that reminds you that this WILL be over one day.

A logbook for the detainee's return

A former detainee suggested that it's useful to maintain a logbook or timeline for the detainee when they return. They will want to know what happened, and in particular, why it took so long to get them home.

It is a difficult task to accomplish this on top of the other responsibilities you are juggling now. But do what you can to make some steps in that direction.

Keep a file with pdfs of official letters; bookmark good articles about your LO or save them as pdfs; take screenshots of supportive tweets or comments; anything that might be a comfort to your LO when they return.

If you get a chance to compile this in some meaningful way, that's great and if not, do the best you can for now. You are tracking not only your LO's detention but also your fight to bring them home.

Visual reference

At times, keeping all the advocacy balls in the air can short a circuit in your brain! It can be hard to remember everything you need to do, and the great ideas you write in your notebook can get lost as page after page gets added.

I like visual solutions to keep on top of pressing issues. You might use post-it notes on a wall, scraps of paper and tape, a chalkboard, a whiteboard, or the side of your refrigerator. The goal is to keep action items in your face, so they don't get lost in the shuffle.

Some examples of items to remember are great ideas discussed on calls or in meetings, follow-ups and thank you's to people I have met, the research I need to do, new contacts I need to make, or ideas I want to explore.

In my notebooks that I use for meetings and calls, I put massive stars near anything that is potentially an action item so that these are easy for me to find later and transfer to my chalkboard. If I don't do this, it will be hard for me to remember the details later.

You may already have a system for keeping up with action items, but if you don't, do something eye-catching and straightforward (like bright colored post-its.) See if you can tackle one action item every few days to keep the advocacy ball rolling.

Action items - organization

- Maintain an spreadsheet (or similar system) for names, email addresses, and phone numbers.
- Keep track of meeting dates and attendees.
- Create similar filing systems on your computer and in your email program.
- Collect items for your LO's return, such as articles, letters, and timeline information.
- Keep action items in your face with visual reminders of some sort.

Chapter Eleven:
Things for families to know and consider

Sharing info with family and friends

It can be challenging to know what information to share with family and friends when your LO is first detained.

Initially, when there isn't much news, it is easy to share what you know. It will be natural to want to share this awful new experience with others.

As the situation progresses and you become more involved in the intricacies of the USG, giving individual updates becomes tiring. And without some forethought, you risk inadvertently sharing sensitive information with people prone to gossip.

We find it useful instead to regularly update social media and the GoFundMe campaign with general news about Paul and our efforts while keeping the bulk of our interactions with the USG under the radar. We only discuss the details with those immediately involved in working for his release.

If your LO's case is public, people may not be sure what to say to you and may feel they should inquire about your LO as an expression of their concern. A handy mechanism for dealing with this is to have some standard answers you can use to update supporters and friends. Think of a few sentences that will encapsulate the current situation, and thank them for their

interest.

You can also tell supporters that you post informative updates to your Facebook page and GoFundMe campaign and encourage them to write to your LO or call their Congressman, if appropriate.

How to manage those who want to be helpful

You are likely to get offers of help from concerned friends and family, even from strangers.

However, managing volunteers also means enlarging the number of people you share details with, which can lead to a number of awkward and unintentional results such as incorrect or personal news being shared without your knowledge or people feeling that they have a license to act as your surrogate.

Additionally, some people express a desire to help but don't have much time available.

You need an ongoing list of practical tasks you can give to potential volunteers that will allow them to feel they are contributing, keeping your need to manage their efforts to a low ebb.

We've covered some of these in earlier chapters, but here's a complete list:

- Ask them (in person or via email and social media) to call and write to their MoC, no matter what state they are in, letting them know that a US citizen is wrongfully detained and encouraging action to get them released.
- To make contact MoCs more manageable, share this link:

  https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members

  to help supporters find the address information they need for their local Congressmen and women. Direct people to write to the MoC's DC offices and ask them to let you know which MoC they contacted so that you can follow up.
- If they have time, ask them to call and write as many MoCs as possible and let you know which MoC they contacted to follow up.
- Ask them to write to the foreign nation's ambassador politely expressing their concern about your LO. You may need to look up the address for them and

provide sample wording.

- Ask them to write to the Secretary of State and the President expressing similar concerns.
- Ask them to contribute to the GoFundMe campaign or similar, and share the information with their clubs and groups who might be willing to help out (and if people are uncomfortable raising funds, ask if they can help with outreach to members of Congress.)
- And if the mail can get to your LO, ask them to write cards and letters to your LO. People may not know what to say to your LO, so suggest that they express their concern about the situation and share local news and happenings. If your LO is being held in a non-English speaking country, letters provide an essential source of news and connection to your LO's real life.

Friends may try to connect you with odd people they know in government. Take every introduction you can, even if you are not sure that this person will be useful. Please don't feel you need to share every detail with this new contact; give them a quick status report of general information and ask for their input.

Depending on how recently they have been in government, they may be helpful, or you may be able to get an introduction to another person closer to the action.

The DC revolving door moves quickly, and people out of DC for more than a few years may be a little out of the loop unless they have parlayed their experience into an equivalent position in the private sector. Talk to everyone you can, however, and see where the conversation goes. Just keep details to yourself until you can assess your new contact's 'need to know.'

Accepting that your routine may be shattered

Whatever your day-to-day routine was, it's likely already gone out the window. Welcome to the new normal.

Advocating for a wrongfully detained LO isn't easy. The first months may be a disaster on the personal front as all of your energy goes into starting up the advocacy effort. The

learning curve is enormous. It takes as much time and dedication as starting a new business. And each family is recreating the wheel.

In the first weeks of my brother's detention, we all hoped it would be over soon, just a blip in otherwise pretty mundane lives. That was not to be.

And it took me a year to even think about exercise, eating correctly, or any of the other activities I used to do. Guilt, exhaustion, and mental overload conspired to make even once-enjoyable pastimes impossible.

Don't be surprised if you find yourself in a strange state of stasis for a few days after advocacy efforts, completely unable to manage the smallest task. Or if one call with a USG official creates days' worth of follow-up, trashing other plans.

You may lose touch with friends, with your old life, with your old routine. But this will not go on forever.

This task is beyond most people, and it's unlikely you would have taken it on voluntarily. But your LO needs you to keep going. You can do it. Take one day at a time. Roll with the changes. And be kind to yourself.

Protecting your privacy

From the moment news gets around that your LO is wrongfully detained, and especially if the case is made public, you will have people intruding on your privacy in ways large and small.

People are curious and may ask intrusive questions as they try to find out more about your LO. They may try to assess for themselves whether your LO is, in fact, guilty. They may try looking for clues in your LO's family life or past that would rationalize the foreign country's behavior.

These questions can come from friends, strangers, USG officials, and the media. Warding off this intrusiveness is exhausting. We have found that personal inquiries of this nature have continued throughout Paul's detention.

Decide early on where you want your boundaries to be, and stick to them. Do all you can to avoid discussing your LO's personal affairs or past and stick to the immediate concern:

your LO has been wrongfully detained. The problem is with the foreign country, not your LO.

The media may have found information about your LO's past or present life themselves. They may try to create a view of the situation based on random facts that make a good story. Assess your need to counter this narrative. If you do need to reframe their approach, when asked about details, give a prepared answer from your briefing book, then pivot right back to discussing the current situation. (See info on briefing books in Handling the Media.)

Regardless of the types of inquiries you receive and the source from which they emanate, you are never obligated to answer anyone's questions. Other people's curiosity is not a valid reason for invading your privacy.

Be aware that media and the curious may scour your social media and website for information about you and your LO. You may need to review your posts and tweets or make accounts private. The press can potentially quote anything you make available to the public.

It's worth the work to put up some barriers. Maintaining your privacy will give you a haven to which you can retreat when the challenges of advocating for your LO become overwhelming.

Contact with other wrongful detainee families

Our family has found it useful to have some contact with the families of other wrongful detainees, past and present.

Not every family wants to engage for personal reasons. When we have made contact, it has typically been via a third party such as the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, Hostage US, or a MoC involved in a hostage or detainee release.

Those people who have chosen to interact with us have provided useful information and meaningful support. And it was great to talk to another person who understood our experiences.

I spoke to a mother whose son returned recently to the US after being held for years abroad. I talked to a past detainee to get insight into their experience. I am in contact with other families whose LO's are still wrongfully detained in several different countries.

The detainee families shed valuable light on the struggles they went through (or are

currently experiencing) to get help for their LO; their paths were similar to ours in many ways, although each family faces their own particular set of challenges. And we try to be similarly helpful to families who reach out to us.

The only downside to this contact is that it underscores how even though we are inextricably tied together through shared experiences, we are also competing for the same small pool of resources.

If you contact current detainee/hostage families, it is OK to acknowledge this dichotomy upfront. We all understand that although we want to see each other's LO's released, it is natural that we should hope our LO is released the soonest. That still leaves plenty of scope for supporting each other.

(Here's a useful social media tip that anyone can use to help your LO and the LO of another family. When someone posts about their LO, you can re-tweet/ share the post and include your concern about their LO and your own LO at the same time. That way, you both get more exposure, and the other family is likely to return the favor.)

Action items - for families

- Regularly update social media and the GoFundMe campaign with general news about your LO.
- Ask volunteers to contact MoCs about your LO.
- Ask volunteers to write to your LO.
- Ask volunteers to write letters to USG officials about your LO.
- Ask volunteers to help fundraise for your LO's GoFundMe campaign.
- Maintain barriers to protect your privacy.
    - Consider contact with other detainee families, past and present (contact them via James W. Foley Legacy Foundation or Hostage US.)
- Be kind to yourself.

Chapter Twelve:

Handling the Media

What to do about media

Each family must decide for themselves the degree to which they want to engage with media. In our case, as in many others, the story of my brother's arrest hit the news before we learned of it ourselves. Through the media, not the State Department, we learned about our brother's fate.

From that point, we took an aggressive stance of encouraging media attention, organizing regular updates to media, and my brother David made himself available for interviews at a mind-numbing rate.

Even if the media does not know about your LO and you want to keep it that way, it's good to understand your options. Sometimes people change their minds and decide to engage with media if they want more attention from the USG. Sometimes, like it or not, the press discovers the situation and starts reporting.

If you're hoping for media coverage, you can do some research on your own to find reporters and journalists who have previously covered detainee and hostage stories or events that take place in the country where your LO is being held. Coordinate outreach to media

through your spokesperson.

Hostage US can connect families with media advisors who work independently of Hostage US. Their media advisors can also help to prepare you for interviews or conversations with journalists to review what questions you might be asked, how to keep the conversation on track, and how best to push your agenda.

I was pleased when my brother David became our spokesperson and was dead set against talking to journalists myself. Over time, however, I became more confident, more in control of the narrative, and after months pounding the pavement in DC, I had my own story to tell. Talking about the travails of advocating for Paul in DC became another way of bringing attention to his case.

In the long run, the decision is (mostly) yours. The media may have broken the story of your LO's wrongful detention, but you can control your degree of engagement. You do not need to do interviews if you don't think it helps your LO's cause.

Your strategy – develop a Q&A 'briefing book'

A briefing book is quite literally a binder or notebook you assemble with questions you anticipate being asked by media or officials and your well-considered answers.

Just as you plan to protect your privacy, you will want to plan out what information to provide when asked questions by people used to getting answers.

You will want to frame your LO as a person worthy of support, but keep the information focused on the current problem of their wrongful detention.

Consider any potential 'gotcha' questions or facts about your LO's current life or past that could sound sensational if put out to the public.

If the media has already discovered unhelpful facts or presents a one-sided view of your LO, create some straight-forward answers that address the points but give a more complete, positive picture.

Some of the questions and answers you will develop for your briefing book will occur to you naturally, as they will be the ones your friends and family have asked you already.

Most of all, you want to concentrate on the facts of the current situation. Avoid

speculation or adding unconfirmed details.

Here are some preliminary questions for your briefing book:

Who is your LO? (Name, age, occupation)

Why were they in a foreign country?

What do you know about their detention?

How do you know that this is a wrongful detention?

What is currently being done by the USG to support your LO?

Over time, answering media and other questions will become second nature. But to start with, you will want to be so familiar with the prepared answers that you can reel them off without stumbling.

Taking the time to develop a briefing book allows you to have some stock answers that you and your team can use to answer intrusive questions and ward off potential problems safely.

Answering media questions

It can be intimidating to be asked questions by a journalist or other media person. As with every profession, some journalists are better than others; some media outlets are better than others. Some will be sympathetic to your LO's cause; others, not so much.

A good journalist reports the facts and does the research. However, deadlines are tight. If you can provide useful, factual information about your LO, you will become a trusted source and have an opportunity to influence the media attention in your LO's favor.

A good journalist is also adept at putting people on the spot to elicit information. You need to decide in advance just how much info to give (hence the value of a briefing book.)

It is always acceptable to say that you would like to think about your answer and come back to a question later.

It is always OK to say that you would rather not discuss a particular subject.

It is also fair to choose not to speak with a particular media representative for your own

reasons.

We decided that just about all media attention would be useful for our LO, but we were more cautious with some reporters than others. Several we would only correspond with by email so that we could be sure to give controlled responses.

If a reporter puts you on the spot with a sticky question, and you'd like to get off the topic ASAP, here is how you do it:

- Give a one-sentence answer to the question you have been asked, hopefully in a way that frames the answer as positively as possible. (A briefing book answer, for example.)
- Your second sentence will be a pivot to your LO's current situation.
- And your third sentence will be to move the conversation forward to some point YOU want to make and proceed from there.

In this way, you can keep a degree of control of the conversation. Politicians and public figures do this all the time. It takes practice, so try it in everyday conversation with friends and family!

If someone does not let you move on and keeps coming back to the same sticky question, you can try something like this (in your own words):

"Thank you for your concern about [LO]. We are concentrating all our efforts on the fact of [LO's] wrongful detention in [country X]."

And follow this with silence and possibly a smile. In other words, that is all you are going to say on the matter.

Note that this phrase doesn't necessarily answer the question you were asked. It doesn't need to. You are not obligated to give other people (even persuasive media) information just because they want it.

Controlling the narrative

When your LO has been wrongfully detained, you may find that both the media and USG

officials are happy to look for reasons why the victim is at fault rather than doing the more difficult job of holding the offending country to task.

They may point out any number of factors such as immigrant status, family connections, dual citizenship, their field of employment, history, personal life, travel habits, family and friends in the foreign country, etc., as ways to frame your LO as being responsible for their wrongful detention.

Victim-blaming is more than frustrating. It's the laziest of excuses for inaction, and I have been astounded by the number of high-ranking officials willing to cast aspersions and blame on my brother rather than on the Russian Federation for his wrongful detention and undeserved criminal sentence.

It will be up to you to control the narrative. That means that along with having stock answers for difficult (and standard) questions, prepare to have plenty to say about the current situation and what you need people to do.

You can tell the media that the USG should be more involved. You can tell individuals within the USG that helping your LO will be good for them in the long run - no politician should want to see a US citizen wrongfully detained and languishing in a foreign jail.

Prepare to have your 'ask's ready and tailored to the person with whom you are talking. Do all you can to frame your LO in a positive and human light, emphasize that the situation requires immediate action, and use your charm to get people on your side to support your LO.

Public relations help

If you want media attention for your LO but are having trouble getting anyone to pick up the story, you may want to look around for some public relations (PR) help. Just as lawyers are willing to help pro bono, PR people are also ready to help you out.

And just as with lawyers, not all PR people are created equal or are a good fit for you. If you need free help, beggars can't be choosers, as the saying goes! But you can make sure you feel comfortable with their advice before going all in.

A PR person who has worked with hostage or detainee cases before is a good choice. If you are not sure whether the PR person you find is reputable, ask Hostage US for their feedback

(they also have PR people in their resource network.)

You may find a PR person is not necessary. These days, you can reach out to journalists on Twitter and Facebook and through links on the media outlet website. Once a story gains traction, you may not need PR help after all.

Action items - media

- Decide the level of engagement you want to have with media at this time.
- Develop a briefing book.
- Practice 3-step answers that allow you to pivot away from sticky questions.
- Practice summing up your LO's situation in a few short sentences.
- If you want media attention, contact writers through news websites or their Twitter accounts.
- Consider asking a PR firm to help if you are having difficulty getting your LO's story out.

Chapter Thirteen:

Coping as an Individual or Family

Coping during your LO's detention

There is no way to prepare for the shock of a wrongful detention, only hindsight to build on and hope that the ordeal will be over soon.

When your LO has been detained overseas on false charges, the world takes on a surreal quality. There you were, living your life, and now you are in a parallel universe having conversations and meeting people you never imagined would be part of your existence.

The US government's process for helping US citizens is improving all the time. And you are not alone. Others have gone down this road before you. Following are some thoughts on coping, based on our experience. I hope you find them helpful.

'Everyone is in jail'

You, and others close to your LO, may feel the burden of your LO's incarceration every day. As you wake up, there are those few seconds of peace and then the new reality sets in, filling your days with a heavy sense of responsibility.

Each of us reacts to stress and anxiety differently. Some people get emotional, or blow

up in frustration, or disappear into silence. A situation like this takes everyone by surprise, and our fear for our LO can take expression in a myriad of ways, some of them downright unhelpful.

Those in the advocacy, spokesperson, and personal affairs management roles can feel incredibly intense pressure from their added responsibilities. Knowing that it rests on your shoulders alone to engage the USG is a heavy load.

The best way I have found to describe our mental state to others is by explaining that with our LO wrongfully imprisoned, we are all in a jail of sorts. Russia has taken ALL of us hostage. None of us can resume our lives, rebuild our lost finances, regain our friends or pastimes. We can't go back to the way things used to be.

And our LO will come home to their world changed forever. Lost jobs, housing, resources, friends, relationships, the whole concept of 'home' shaken.

The agony is personal and intense when your government doesn't step up when you're hitting dead ends, when you don't know where to turn next. You're brand new at this game, and yet it's all on you to bring in the win.

If this feeling sounds familiar, reach out to Hostage US and talk to them, or ask if there's another detainee family with whom you can chat. You are not alone. A phone call with someone who gets your situation will do wonders for your mental state. It's not a weakness to talk to others with similar experiences.

Contact with your LO

Contact with your LO is both desired and a potential minefield. You are unlikely to want to share the specifics of efforts the USG might be undertaking for their release or the lack of action you may be facing from the USG. And yet, your LO will want to know when they will be coming home.

The best message you can communicate is that your LO has support, but their release timeline is unknown. If you've been working the DC angle, these statements will be accurate. Even if the USG is entirely on board and you shared every detail you had (not advised!), you still could not guarantee your LO's release or the timing of the effort.

Your LO may also be expressing to you their anger, frustration, paranoia, suspicion, and

other natural but unhelpful reactions to their imprisonment and lack of control. They are unlikely to understand your troubles and challenges; after all, how bad can it be, you are not in jail! These emotions are difficult to process when you are already operating on fumes. You may also have feelings of anger, with nowhere to vent.

Resentment and upset are a likely by-product and add to the misery of the situation for all.

Two separate missions are underway: one is to support the health and welfare, physical and mental, of your LO. This challenge probably consumes your LO and they have little room for anything else.

The second is the mission you are on: getting USG support and getting your LO released. As important as it is to sustain your LO, it's even more important to get them home.

Do everything you can for your LO, of course, but if you need to step back a little to accomplish your mission, that is fine, too.

If the situation warrants it, make your LO part of your team working on their release. If they can write letters, ask them to write to the same people you are engaging. If they can make calls, ask them to communicate with a few trusted officials or send them personal messages through you.

Focus your mental energies on the tasks you need to accomplish to get USG help. Keep pushing on, info-share with your LO only to the extent you feel wise, and stockpile answers and data for their eventual return to freedom.

Stigma

Having a LO in jail comes with a stigma. Even though you know your LO is innocent, even if the USG agrees with you, others may harbor doubt, and that doubt will make itself known in potentially hurtful ways.

Some may want to distance themselves from potential stain to their reputation by association. Children and young people might not know how to respond to their peers when defamatory articles appear in print about your LO. Your extended family may feel this stigma and uncertainty, even if they don't know your LO well.

You will not be able to change people's feelings, but stay strong and have faith. Some of our LO's friends who initially turned away or were silent, eventually got in touch as the situation unfolded. Other friends and family members surprised us with their heartfelt support and help.

Each person will react in their way to your LO's wrongful detention, but none of those reactions are static. Be patient with yourself, and try to be patient with others. Keep your focus on your goal - the release of your LO -- and don't let other people's reactions distract you.

The trauma of pretense

One of the most painful aspects of this process is the facade that advocates must keep up for the duration.

Our government and the media want you to feed them a particular narrative of the US citizen bravely standing up in the face of prolonged detention, preferably a corn-fed, white, middle-class, ex-military, Christian, native-born US citizen from Kansas with a good-looking spouse, two blond kids, and a Ford F150 back on the family farm.

They want the family gathered around, teary-eyed, sitting together on the couch holding a framed photo of their LO, asking the President to please bring them home.

Anything else is not so useful for re-elections or the evening news. Few want to deal with the real trauma of a family's suffering or any narrative that isn't made-for-TV.

Families of detainees past and present have shared the pressure they feel to maintain a façade, to be a perfect family worthy of assistance from the USG. If your LO has the bad luck of straying from that narrative by being an immigrant, a dual national, having a less-than-perfect background, etc., it's an uphill battle.

If you are in this situation and find yourself struggling to overcome these barriers, please reach out for advice to the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, Hostage US, or a similar NGO. They may be able to point you in the direction of sympathetic MoCs and USG officials who will understand your situation and get you the help your LO needs.

Online trolls and the generally unhelpful

Over the weeks and months, you will meet some wonderful, helpful, and supportive

folks, often when you least expect it. Even if your encounter is brief, these people will lift your spirits and help you carry on.

You may also meet the opposite. Whether in person or online, trolls, insensitive people, and the generally unhelpful abound. Some don't think before speaking; others are attracted to your situation's novelty and are deliberately hurtful.

Ignore the insensitive. Don't pay them any mind. That's pretty easy.

But if you're like us, you have never been the target of conspiracy theorists, Russian trolls, American trolls, and the clueless.

It took me several months to learn the best practice is 'don't feed the trolls.' Whether on social media or in person, it just isn't worth your time to respond, and it won't make a bit of difference to the US government what is being said on the side.

It is so hard to sit back and let these folks make damaging or dangerous statements about your LO or family members. However, if you end up being the target of this sort of behavior, do tell someone. Take screenshots, save emails, document any harassment.

And do not engage.

Talking about your loved one

I have yet to find the perfect conversational phrases to describe what is going on with my brother. As we are approaching the 2-year mark of his wrongful detention, many people have heard about him. But they don't know what to say either.

I have a few stock phrases that I will use if I sense that the topic needs to be addressed. I will say something such as, "You may know that the Russian authorities are holding my brother, and we are trying to get him released."

At that point, the other person will then feel free to express interest, sympathy, etc. If I want to move beyond the topic, I explain that the highest levels of the USG are engaged on his behalf, and we hope for a successful resolution to the situation soon.

In this way, you can choose to keep your discussion as brief as you'd like, which can be crucial in business settings where you want your private life to remain that way -- even if sections of it appear on CNN! Acknowledge that people don't know what to say to you. There is

no chapter on 'wrongful detentions' in the Emily Post books on manners.

At work or in clubs and other gatherings, you may wish to make a brief announcement or a quick update if you feel it is appropriate, but don't feel pressured to do or say anything if you aren't comfortable. If you want, save the updates for Facebook or your email groups, and leave it at that.

Letters and photos

Your LO may be away from the US for a good while before they can be released and returned home. During that time, there are some specific ways you can support your LO.

Prisons have regulations, and hostile foreign countries don't always follow their own rules. If your LO is being held for political gain, they may face more harsh restrictions than other inmates. Nevertheless, any or all of the following will help a prisoner:

- Phone calls
- Parcels of personal supplies
- Parcels of food items
- Books and magazines
- Letters and photos

Don't feel bad if you can't provide these items for any reason. And not every prisoner will be allowed outside contact, regardless. My brother was not allowed phone calls for 16 months, for example. Do what you can, and coordinate with American Citizen Services or the Embassy to see what can be sent to your LO.

And if those items are not allowed for any reason, use that information as part of your public messaging. Any denial of consular access, lawyer access, food or supplies, reading material, mail, etc., becomes useful information to share with media and the USG.

Helpful organizations

In the Other Resources section, you will find contact information for several

non-government organizations (NGO's) that may be very helpful to you in the days ahead.

Do consider reaching out to each of them to see if they can engage with you, depending on the particulars of your LO's detention. Some organizations do not work with families immediately but step in when it becomes evident that the case is a wrongful detention and the USG is not making headway.

Regardless, put your LO on their radar, and ask to keep them informed as the situation unfolds. These are caring people with deep concern about hostages and detainees around the world.

You may also find other organizations specific to the country in which your LO is being held, human rights organizations, political think tanks, etc. There is no harm in getting in touch with everyone you think might be helpful.

Your goal is to info-share, build your network of contacts, and keep them up to date. Don't be afraid to ask anyone you contact for an opportunity to info-share. Even if the connection you are speaking with can't help directly, they may be able to point you in a useful direction. Keep spreading the word.

Action Items - Coping

- Reach out to Hostage US and other NGO's for information and support during your ordeal.
- Ask if there is a past or present detainee family with whom you can chat.
- When the going gets tough, focus your mental energies on the tasks you need to accomplish to get USG help.
- Be patient with yourself, and try to be patient with others.
- Don't feed the trolls.
- Keep supporting your LO, even when it gets difficult to do so.

Chapter Fourteen: The long-term

Maintain your info-sharing via regular statements

Advocacy through prolonged detention puts a drain on your energy and resources. Regardless of your ups and downs, or the activity or lack thereof within the USG, continue to info-share. It is THE most valuable activity in which a family member can engage.

Keep your entire contact list, friends, family, and supporters, updated every couple of weeks on the latest news about your LO (even if there has been no contact, that is news in itself). You can include important statements that officials have made; milestone dates or events such as holidays that your LO is missing; any pertinent news that has appeared in the US or foreign media.

When you aren't sure what to do next, make a new contact. That might be a MoC you haven't contacted, someone at an NGO in the US or overseas, or a media person you want to engage on your LO's story.

Don't beat yourself up if you can't do this daily. Your own life can't come to a complete halt, and you will need some downtime to recharge as you advocate passionately for your LO. But when an opportunity avails itself, take advantage of the moment to move the ball down the field by info-sharing.

People will continue to care about your LO if you keep them informed.

Keep your eye on the prize

If you have read through this guide to this point, you may be exhausted just contemplating all the hurdles you might face getting this done for your LO! And if you are already involved in this process and reading this guide for new ideas, you will already be aware of how important it is to maintain your health and your spirits to have strength for the journey ahead.

- Keep as much balance as you can in your own life.
- Make the decisions you must for your LO in good faith.
- Try to keep your LO's spirits up, and your own.
- Continue to press the USG to do all they can to bring your LO home.
- Stabilize your energy so that you can maintain for the long haul.

In the early weeks, the mother of a former detainee told me to maintain my health and nutrition, and although I heard the message, I didn't absorb it. I was barely sleeping or eating, which continued for months as the responsibility and work of getting help weighed down on me.

Over time, support grew, others shared our burden, and I finally addressed my health and well-being. I won't pretend that life is anything at all like it was before my brother's arrest. And we can never go back. Our lives have changed in a myriad of ways. Our family will never be the same. We can only hope that my brother can pick up the pieces of his own life on his return and continue forward to a happy future.

Until that time, our focus is unwavering and fixed on the one goal: getting him home.

So until your LO is free, keep your eye on the prize. We are all right there with you, cheering you on!

Action items - the long term

- Update your entire USG contact list, friends, family, and supporters, every few weeks.
- Keep as much balance as you can in your own life.
- Make the decisions you must for your LO in good faith.
- Try to keep your LO's spirits up.
- Continue to press the USG to do all they can to bring your LO home.
- Stabilize your energy so that you can maintain for the long haul.
- Keep your eye on the prize.

Chapter Fifteen: Other Resources

Congressional Offices

Search for members of Congress at these links:

Senators:

https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Representatives:

https://www.house.gov/representatives

Congress.gov

A resource for finding more about everything Congress-related, including current and past legislation and resolutions:

https://www.congress.gov/

US State Department organization chart

Organization Chart for the State Department:

https://www.state.gov/department-of-state-organization-chart/

US State Department directories

General Consular Affairs information:

https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/contact-us.html

The links on this page allow you to download individual directories:

https://www.state.gov/telephone-directory/

Hostage US

www.hostageus.org

Hostage US is a non-profit organization that provides support to American hostages, wrongful detainees, and their families through care, information, guidance, and access to pro bono professional services. Hostage US helps families cope with the challenges of a hostage-taking and helps former hostages and detainees rebuild their lives when they return home. Hostage US does not get involved in the operational response to hostage situations, but they can make the frightening and lonely ordeal much more bearable.

Hostage US support is provided free of charge and on a fully confidential basis. They are independent of any outside interests and only focus on the needs of hostages and their families.

James W. Foley Legacy Foundation

https://jamesfoleyfoundation.org/

The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation advocates for the freedom of all Americans held hostage abroad and promote the safety of journalists worldwide.

We advocate for American Hostage Freedom by:

- Supporting individual hostages, wrongful detainees and their families.
- Raising awareness about US citizens kidnapped or wrongfully detained abroad.

- Conducting annual research to ensure US hostage policy is prioritizing the return of our citizens held abroad and assisting their families.
- Engaging with the US Congress, White House, FBI, and Department of State to push for necessary improvements in US hostage policy.
- Collaborating with third party experts and partner organizations assisting families in their efforts to free their loved ones.

We promote Journalist Safety by:

- Developing and implementing James W. Foley journalist safety curricula for both graduate and undergraduate university journalism programs.
- Increasing access to safety training, medical insurance and security information for freelance journalists through A Culture of Safety (ACOS) Alliance and other journalism and press freedom partnerships, including annual safety training grants.

James W. Foley Legacy Foundation Hostage Reports

2020 report:

Bringing Americans Home 2020

A Non-Governmental Assessment of U.S. Hostage Policy and Family Engagement

Cynthia Loertscher

https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/bringing-americans-home-2020/

2019 report:

Bringing Americans Home

The First Non-Governmental Assessment of U.S. Hostage Policy and Family Engagement

Cynthia Loertscher

https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/bringing-americans-home/

Also:

https://jamesfoleyfoundation.org/american-hostage-advocacy

The Richardson Center for Global Engagement

https://www.richardsondiplomacy.org/

Throughout a distinguished career as Congressman, UN Ambassador, Energy Secretary and Governor, Bill Richardson has developed an exceptional international reputation, an extensive network of personal contacts and enormous global experience. He has successfully completed sensitive diplomatic missions in countries such as North Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Cuba, Burma, Congo and Colombia.

Families, organizations and world leaders regularly seek out Richardson for help because of his unique experience. He has secured prisoner releases and mediated international conflicts in both official and non-official capacities. He has been a representative of the U.S. government and has served as an unofficial envoy with no ties to any government. Richardson has a proven track record of negotiating with and earning the trust of international leaders. Richardson has succeeded in areas of the world where others refuse to negotiate.

The Richardson Center for Global Engagement negotiates the release of political prisoners and hostages. The Center does this on behalf of the families, at no cost to them.

PPD-30

This Presidential Policy Directive (PPD), directs a renewed, more agile United States Government response to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals and other specified individuals abroad.

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/24/presidential-policy-directive-hostage-recovery-activities

It establishes processes to enable consistent implementation of the policies set forth in this directive, to ensure close interagency coordination in order to employ all appropriate means to recover U.S. hostages held abroad, and to significantly enhance engagement with hostages' families.

It also reaffirms the United States Government's personnel recovery policy, which seeks to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hostage-takings and other circumstances in which U.S. nationals are isolated from friendly support. This policy will thereby further important national

security and foreign policy interests by strengthening the protections for U.S. nationals outside the United States.

Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act

Named after hostage Robert Levinson, it expands the scope of PPD-30 to include wrongful detentions and provides for retaliatory actions against the offending nation.

https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/712/text

UN Rules on prisoner treatment

www.unodc.org/documents/rpanc/Publications/UN_documents/Crime/Compendium_UN_SN_crime_prevention.pdf

Privacy Act Waiver and American Citizen Services

If you want to read more a lot more about the Privacy Act, Privacy Act Waiver, and how American Citizen Services works with these, visit:

https://fam.state.gov/fam/07fam/07fam0060.html

This page gives examples of how much information can be released by ACS, under what circumstances, and how ACS will respond to different queries.